Smithsonian Libraries

Adopted by

Elizabeth Brady
and Joe Powers

In honor of
Jane and Tom Sauer

December 16, 2018

OLD HICKS THE GUIDE;

OR,

ADVENTURES IN THE CAMANCHE COUNTRY IN SEARCH OF A GOLD MINE.

BY

CHARLES W. WEBBER,

30771

NEW YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,

82 CLIFF STREET.

1848.

E 99
, C 85 W 3

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year one thousand
eight hundred and forty-eight, by

HARPER & BROTHERS,

in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the Southern District
of New York.

S
3107
0635043
848
RB

TO

MY HONORED FATHER,

THIS VOLUME

Is Respectfully Inscribed.

C. W. WEBBER.

P R E F A C E.

My publishers want a Preface. The public is so frequently annoyed by the ill-timed and obtrusive impertinence of Prefaces, Prefatory Remarks, &c., that there seems to be a general inclination to snub authors who "*indulge*" in them. For my part, lest this same public should say to me, as the old story goes, "Consider yourself insulted, sir!" I should greatly prefer anticipating this with, "Consider yourself cowed!" and be done with it, thereby saving myself the pain of inflicting, and it the pain of enduring, a "Preface."

"A thought unspoken is as a deed unacted—a thing *said* is *done*."

But then it is considered necessary that I should announce who I am.

"A Texan Ranger!" to be sure, as any body will be apt to find out who reads my book.

Is this a romance, or are these incidents real?

A better evidence than my own assertion is that contained in the narrative itself: it bears its character on its face!

Were you ever in the Comanche country, or on such an expedition?

Yes, both; see the numerous sketches I published three years since in the American Whig and Democratic Reviews, in which I first introduced to their readers those heroic Ranger leaders, Colonel Hays, Major Chavalier, and

the lamented Walker, of the Rifles, all of whom were my comrades.

Are this French count and the French woman you introduce real characters?

Ask any prominent Texan, and he will tell you *something* about these personages; but as I happen to know more than any of them, I tell you a *great deal*.

What about this Gold Mountain?

Much that is real and interesting. I suppose nobody has ever crossed from San Antonio de Bexar to the Rio Grande but has heard *something* of it too; and as I happen to know *more* than most of them, I have undertaken to tell you that as well.

What about these extraordinary stories you have to tell concerning the Camanches and other southern tribes?

"A great cry and little wool."

There is very little, comparatively, known about them by any one of the white race who has ever returned to civilization. What information I have managed to collect, through much hardship and many sufferings, I here lay before you. If my facts seem improbable, I would advise you to undertake such an expedition yourself for your own satisfaction.

These are the common questions asked me, and here you have my common answers.

I would now conclude with a *nate* piece of advice, as Paddy would be apt to give it: Read the book through first, *then* turn back and read this "Preface."

THE AUTHOR.

C O N T E N T S.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE TRINITY COLONY	13
II. THE RESCUE	21
III. A NEW ANNOYANCE	29
IV. THE START	38
V. THE JOURNAL	47
VI. JOURNAL CONTINUED	57
VII. JOURNAL CONTINUED	68
VIII. JOURNAL CONTINUED	81
IX. THE CAMP	99
X. THE PEACEFUL VALLEY	115
XI. THE ADVENTURE	127
XII. THE FRENCH WOMAN	140
XIII. A STRANGE RECOGNITION	159
XIV. PRISONERS, ALL HANDS	175
XV. THE RANCHO	186
XVI. THE COUNCIL	203
XVII. THE SUDDEN PROMOTION	219
XVIII. THE GAMES	231
XIX. THE PURSUIT	249
XX. THE OLD MISSION	261
XXI. THE BURNING RANCHO	279
XXII. A WILDERNESS HOSPITAL	296
XXIII. PHILOSOPHY OF SAVAGE LIFE	304
XXIV. HO FOR THE GOLD MOUNTAIN	319
XXV. THE RETREAT	333
XXVI. ALL EXPLAINED	346

OLD HICKS THE GUIDE.

CHAPTER I.

THE TRINITY COLONY.

IN the latter part of the winter of 1843 I was engaged in business in Cincinnati. My enterprise was an unsuccessful one ; and, after a protracted and exhausting struggle with untoward circumstances, I was finally compelled to surrender every thing and retire.

My creditors were kind enough, after handing to me the small surplus of receipts over my liabilities, to offer me a handsome present. For this they received my thanks, though I chose to decline accepting it ; but my health and spirits being greatly fagged, I cast about me for some active employment, which would afford me the requisite mental and physical excitement of which I stood in need.

An enterprising company, whose principal stockholders lived in Louisville, were making great exertions to fulfill the terms of a conditional Grant made to them several years before by the Texan government. The contract was very much on the plan of the old Mexican Empresario Grant, requiring the introduction of three hundred families, and their permanent settlement on the land within five years, as the condition to vest the ownership in the company. The location of the territory in question was at the sources of the Trinity River, near, and, indeed, forming a portion of the Cross Timber.

The company, under great discouragements, had succeeded in establishing nearly two hundred families, and were now making the final effort for the collection and transportation of the remainder. A proposition was made to me to go out as Emigration Agent to the company, with general authority for the supervision of its affairs and interests, until one of the leading members should arrive in person.

This proposition came very opportunely ; for I had a great horror of loafing, and am constitutionally fond of action. It offered, in hardy employment, the relief I so much needed after my late disappointment. I accepted the trust, and was soon engrossed in the business and designs of the company, and in the bustle of preparing eighty families for their journey to a new home.

We chartered a small steam-boat to take us all up the Red River ; and into this, in the middle of May, we tumbled, men, women, wagons, pots, pans, beds, guns, plows, horses, axes, pigs, children, and chickens, in one heterogeneous mass of animate and inanimate matter, and then our little Shamrock went puffing and snorting down the Ohio like a broken-winded hack.

After a trip of little incident, but, between our live stock and escape pipe, plenty of noise, we disembarked at Natchitoches, put our wagons together, bought oxen and horses, and set off across the country to the settlement.

On our arrival at the spot of our destination we found every thing, as I expected, in confusion. The Indians had discovered the location of the settlers, and become extremely troublesome. Since the commencement of the settlement they had been entirely unmolested, and thought themselves secure of impunity from the depredations of their uncourteous neighbors ; but the pleasant illusion had entirely vanished, and, along with it, their thriving herds of cattle and horses.

I found the settlement, instead of the smiling paradise of peace and plenty which the emigrants expected to see, a military colony

DSI

suffering for the necessities of life. They were so beset by the Camanche, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and other tribes of Indian marauders, that it was perilous for the hunters to turn out for game except in parties of some strength. Even then, so soon as they were out of sight, their thieving enemies would pounce down on the defenseless settlement from the other side, and either scalp their women and children, or drive off the few stragglers left of their herds.

The poor fellows had become so thoroughly baited and worn out by this incessant and unexpected warfare—for, supposing themselves out of the Indian range, they had made no provision for it—that they had set themselves down in the surly endurance of despair, and preferred rather to starve a little than leave their families unprotected.

My first duty was to organize the colony for efficient and immediate defense. This, with the re-enforcement accompanying me, was easily effected. Besides having, the third day after our arrival, pretty well drubbed a party of Camanches we caught lurking in the neighborhood, we had breathing-time allowed us before the next alarm to get things into something like order.

I first set to work with all our available force to planting stockades around the whole of the houses, a work which had, strangely enough, been neglected. Connected with these yards, and inclosed in the same way, we formed pens for the cattle and horses to be driven into in case of the appearance of our vagabond visitors. We then proceeded to provide separate houses for ourselves, the newcomers, on the same improved plan; and, as we all worked in a body, finishing one establishment out and out before we moved on to the next, our little family fortresses were run up rapidly.

Before eight weeks had gone by we were nearly all provided for; as all that was necessary for protection against the Indians was simply to plant a high, stout fence of posts around the cabin, over which these gentry could neither leap their horses nor shoot conveniently while on horseback. As to leaving their saddles to

scale a fence, that would be altogether beneath their warrior dignity ; they would never dream of such condescension ; and women and children are just as safe behind these stockades as they would be in Edinburgh Castle. It is a determined feature of Camanche tactics never to dismount in the presence of an enemy except on compulsion of a rifle ball, or some argument as persuasive.

Each settler was allowed three hundred acres of land any where in the bounds of the Grant, excepting, of course, those covered by prior claims ; but as neighborship at this stage of matters was of rather more importance than the indulgence of a very coy taste, where all the land was good and all the scenery lovely, the different claims, particularly those of the late arrivals, were wedged into each other as close as convenient ; though some of the older settlements were ten, fifteen, and twenty miles distant.

On the whole, our colony in a very little while presented a well-to-do and thriving appearance. Certainly, Nature had been bounteously lavish enough in her choicest gifts to gratify the most exacting humors. Our little farms clustered along the banks of the Trinity, or, rather, along the edge of the forest, which fringed them with its deep, but pleasant shadows ; pleasant, from the contrast of the clear, sunny waters of the stream glancing through them on one side—with the wide, waving sea of green and glowing hues stretched in boundless, silent majesty on the other, to where the blue arch bowed to meet it.

The sun every night went down to rest on a flowery couch ; and the extended line of that phenomenon, the Cross Timber, laid its dark, regular length far out into the faded distance.* We

* This remarkable line of timber is evidently a work of art, like the Chinese Wall ; and, like that structure, was, no doubt, intended to mark the limits between two nations. In addition to being plumb through its whole course with the true meridian, its width is determined with geometrical precision. It stretches for several hundred miles over hill, dale, and prairie with the same uniformity, forming the solitary exception, in all the vast plains of our vast hemisphere, of a line of timber deviating to any great degree from the general course of streams.

needed no fencing for our fields ; and the dark, rich loam of the prairie, turned up to the sun, was soon, with very little labor, smiling with the pale green of our luxuriant crops ; while, at a little distance, up to their knees in the fragrant grass, our horses and herds idled away a careless life amid secure abundance.

Of the most active young men of the colony I had organized a troop of rangers for general defense ; but as we were pretty generally on horseback, and on the alert, our Indian visitors had learned to be a little shy. What with hunting buffalo, however, chasing deer, and lassoing mustangs, our time glided along pleasantly. There was just enough of danger to give the required zest to what would have otherwise been a somewhat monotonous life. One of our adventures had some influence on my after life, as will be seen.

We had passed two months of uninterrupted quiet in the usual round of ranging, hunting, and so on. Our settlers had entirely recovered their spirits. Even the women and children ventured some distance into the prairie to gather strawberries and flowers, so entire was the security felt ; our cattle were permitted to range for miles, and were less frequently herded ; and our horses had the freedom of the ten miles round, and as much further as they chose to wander.

My ranger boys had become less careful in their outpost duties, and, instead of being on the look-out for Indian trails, were chasing, helter-skelter, each herd of deer or mustangs that came in sight. Indeed, we were all falling back into the old state of careless security.

While such was the condition of affairs, one bright morning, when most of the men were off on a mustang drive, a number of boys—children of my nearest neighbors—had collected to bathe in a pretty little basin, formed by an eddy of the river opposite my house. I heard their merry yells, and taking down my gun—a precaution grown as habitual, before going out, as putting on my cap—I walked listlessly down to the river bank to look at them.

There were five houses within half a mile, above and below me. The women, with their sun-bonnets on, were tripping across from one house to the other, to pay neighborly gossiping visits; the house-dogs jogged lazily along behind them; the goats were frisking and butting at each other outside the picketing; a man at the plow was whistling a sleepy roundelay; groups of cattle in sight were reclining on the grass, slowly grinding away at the everlasting cud; and the thin wreaths of opaque smoke from the chimneys were clearly defined against the intensely brilliant transparency of a cloudless blue sky. The whole scene was the very ideal of quiet, delicious repose.

I remember being particularly struck with the happy and harmonious calm that had fallen upon our sometime stormy home, and of thinking how perfectly the poet's dream might now be realized; how pleasant here,

"Until life's sunny day be quite gone down,
To sit and smile with joy;"

when suddenly the sound of a gun caused me to turn my head.

The first object that met my view was the whistling plowman scampering, as if for dear life, toward his home, yelling, "Indians! Indians!" Further on, around the most distant house in sight, I could distinguish forty or fifty dark riders, who were galloping to and fro with great rapidity, gathering together our horses and mules. I sent on the warning cry, at the top of my lungs, to the women; and then such consternation, shrieks, and splashing as there was among the little scamps in the water, you can conceive, if you have ever seen a hawk dip down among a covey of wild ducks.

I called to the boys to run to my house, which was about four hundred paces off, for I saw some of the Indians were coming toward us at full speed; and the little fellows, shaking the water from their dripping hair, some stopping to pick up a shirt, and others bare as they came into the world, scrambled up the bank and plied their tiny feet, screaming all the way, to the picketing.

One or two of them were out some distance in the stream, and were delayed by their fright in getting up the bank ; so that by the time they reached me the Indians were too close to permit them to escape to the house unaided, and but for my gun they would have lost their scalps.

The foremost Indian galloped up very close, but, on my raising my gun, wheeled to avoid my shot ; and with my face turned toward the savage to keep him at bay—the little fellows, almost frantic with fright, clinging to my legs—I commenced my backward retreat toward the house.

The Camanches will seldom rush upon an American—who has a gun in his hand, and shows by his deliberation that he is perfectly cool—until he has fired ; after that, they will swoop upon him before he can load again. It is, therefore, very easy to keep a number of them at a very respectful distance by raising your gun, as if to shoot, whenever they come too close.

Four of the savage rascals had by this time come up, and were circling around me, endeavoring, by their yells, clamors, and threatening gestures, to draw my fire. I was aware that if I fired I might be sure of instant death, and so backed slowly and steadily on toward the picketing. The little boys clung to me so desperately with their naked limbs as seriously to impede my progress.

The savages, with tufts of horse-hair streaming from their limbs, and circlets and plumes of gaudy feathers flaunting from their heads, and the manes and tails of their horses, whooped, yelled, and clattered their long lances against their white shields of bull's hide, as they scudded to and fro around me, with the swiftness of sea birds ; becoming more and more eager, and closing their circle nearer, as I approached the picket.

My gun, fortunately, was a double barrel. I knew they would make a final and desperate rush to prevent my escape. We were now within eighty rods of the picket stiles ; the main body of the Indians had nearly reached us, and there was no time to lose.

Two Indians, who seemed to take their position with the design of maintaining it, were between us and the stiles. I walked steadily toward them, and leveled my gun. They swung themselves down behind the bodies of their horses, leaving nothing exposed but the leg by which they clung to the saddle. I told the boys to run toward them, intending to fire as they raised themselves in the saddle to strike; but the cunning rascals were watching me from under their horses' necks, and, seeing that they must catch it if they raised themselves to shoot, wisely started their horses on, shooting several arrows without changing their position, and wounding the boys considerably.

I saw my young charges reach the steps. Now was my time to run for it, for fifty Camanches were within as many paces of me, thundering on at full speed. I started for precious life. There was a general howl and rush toward me from every side; and I felt the prick of several arrows. It was only twenty paces now to the stiles. I wheeled and fired at the nearest; they all recoiled for an instant; a few desperate bounds, and my foot was on the lower stile, when a lance whizzed past my ear and quivered in the post, while a deafening, furious roar burst from every throat.

I faced about again. The foremost Indian was within ten feet, standing in his horse's stirrups, in the very act of plunging his lance at me. Quick as thought I fired in his face, and sprang, or, rather, tumbled over the stile into my yard.

When I picked myself up, I heard the hoarse gnashing of their disappointed rage, and the clatter of retreating hoofs.

CHAPTER II.

THE RESCUE.

THIS was a pretty close graze ; nothing saved me but the last charge of my faithful double barrel, and, as it was, several of their confounded little arrows were sticking about me for mementoes.

The whole scene, long as it takes to give you an idea of it, could not have occupied over two minutes ; but in that paltry fraction of time how fiercely vivid had been the transition from the very poetry of rural quiet to the stormy and terrible reality of savage war ! But this was not the last of it, by a good deal.

I climbed to the top of the stiles again, after loading my gun, just in time to see the scalp torn from the head of one of our men who was returning from a hunt on foot, and was so hard pressed as to be compelled to fire his rifle. He had been instantly borne to the earth by a dozen lances, in full view of his own house.

Their failure and loss in my case had greatly infuriated them, and although poor Thompson had been steady and cool, like a veteran frontiersman as he was, yet they had rushed upon him in a body, determined to have a scalp if it cost a warrior.

It did, too, and one of their chiefs at that ; for the eye and nerve of the gallant fellow did not fail him in that fearful moment, when they closed so madly, dashing around him, that their lances met, grating, in his body. A chief, whose lance first touched him, tumbled stiffly forward amid the trampling hoofs, and the hunter was avenged.

One of the women made a very narrow escape, and was only

saved by the courage of her dog, who sprung at the nose of the Camanche's horse, and made the animal shy just as the rider was about to transfix her, as she was climbing the picket stiles. She got over safe, and the baffled rascal pursued the gallant dog into the river, where it also escaped, much to my gratification.

During these scenes a portion of their number had been busily engaged in collecting all our mules and horses that were loose on the prairie, and now they started after the frightened animals, who were tearing off like mad in the direction they wished them to go.

In a few moments more they were out of sight, and all was still for a little while as before ; but, fortunately, we had not been quite so silly as to have turned out our favorite riding horses, and in a short time there was a gathering, in hot haste, of all the men who were at home.

They came galloping up to my house from every direction, rifles in hand, with hot brows, flaming eyes, and curses deep-breathed between their teeth, eager to be led in the pursuit for vengeance.

Still more fortunately, just as we were starting on the trail, the very party which had been absent on the mustang drive came, breathless and foaming, up. It seems they had met with the Camanche trail, and, suspecting what had occurred, had run their horses in at full speed. With a few hasty words, explaining the extent of the mischief, and a wild shout of vengeance for poor Thompson, we were off on the chase, numbering thirty determined men.

Of course, there was no difficulty in tracing the trail, which was broad as a wagon-road through the grass ; and we followed at the best pace of our horses ; for our success in coming up with them all depended upon the speed of our animals.

As we swept by the farm of old Hicks, one of the earlier settlers, who had posted himself on the very outskirts of the grant, the gray-haired veteran was seen urging his horse across his field to meet us. As he approached, we could see, from the eagerness of his gestures, that something was wrong. We halted for an instant,

and the glare of his eyes, and ashy pallor of his rigid face, as he joined us, were even more eloquent of his terrible news than the few words he with difficulty gasped out from between his clinched teeth,

“My children!”

“Great God! which?”

“John and Mary! they’ve carried them off!”

Nothing more was spoken, but, bending forward with a perfect howl of fury, the rangers lashed their horses like madmen. Such an incident was sufficiently calculated to rouse a delirium of wrath in their fiery natures.

In addition to the other outrages, these two children had been torn from their old parent, to be dragged off to a horrible captivity in the distant hills, unless we could catch the brutal spoilers before they had gained a covert.

No marvel that horses were goaded even when faithfully at their utmost speed; that swollen veins were knotted along flushed temples, and curses and yells burst at intervals from tightly-drawn lips, as the image of those fair young children, writhing in the black, naked arms of a filthy and ferocious warrior, would rise up before us. For every body loved little Molly Hicks, “wi’ the lint-white locks,” and Johnny was a second “Benjamin, the child of his old age,” to the hardy pioneer.

As he rode in front, which position he somehow maintained, with all the headlong eagerness of the younger members of the party, with his features stiffened and set, his eyes fixed on the distance before him, and his long, white hair streaming from his uncovered head, I thought I had never looked upon a more striking picture of stern, mute agony. It was enough to have strung the nerves of a dastard to reckless daring—one look at that silent old man.

The trail was leading in the direction of the densest portion of the Cross Timber, where, too, among wooded and broken ridges, the head waters of the Trinity took their origin, breaking in nu-

merous springs from dark gorges ; and in this rugged and extensive tract we supposed they would endeavor to conceal themselves by throwing us off the trail.

Soon we were scudding beneath the shade of the tall forest. There was no undergrowth, but the shaft-like trunks rose dark and bare to a considerable height, leaving long open vistas between them. A chill awe came over us at this swift transition from the sunny expanse of the prairie to the solemn gloom of this great natural temple.

Contrary to our expectations, the trail, instead of diverging north, toward the hills, kept on west, directly through the belt of the Cross Timber. These Indians have an unconquerable aversion to the brush, and our hopes were greatly elated to find that, true to this instinct, they were keeping in the open woods, and probably making for the plains beyond the deep forest.

This course offered us much greater assurance that we should be able to keep the trail, and finally overhaul them. But it was nearly six miles across, and our reckless haste was beginning to tell upon our horses ; so that, with all the tumult and intensity of our excitement, we were obliged somewhat to check our gait.

For several miles we continued silently galloping down those dim, leaf-fretted aisles, the old man still retaining his position in front, never for an instant turning his eyes to the right or to the left, but staring fixedly ahead.

Suddenly he raised himself quickly in the stirrups, and with a sharp, shrill shout, "There !" plunged the spurs into his horse. I looked ahead, and could just distinguish objects gleaming swiftly past the trees far before us.

With a shout that made those tangled arches shiver again, we all followed him. The wild whirl of maddening excitement was beyond any description. The men fairly shrieked with the exultation of savage joy.

Our horses caught the spirit, and seemed energized with super-

natural speed, as they fled by the trees so swiftly that the trunks seemed run into each other, and to form a continuous wall. Now and then, through a wider opening before us, we would get a full, but momentary view of the spotted horses of the foe streaking across it. Then such a burst of shouting from our men!

In this way the chase had continued for several miles, without lessening materially the distance between us, and we were beginning to fear that our horses would fail us even, when the old man, pointing ahead, laughed out with the exultation of a fiend; and, as we swept past the object, I saw it was a horse of one of the warriors that had dropped dead from exhaustion. How the men yelled at this sight.

Their horses were giving out, and we were sure of them! Another! and yet another! laid by the trail! I saw one of the warriors, on foot, running off through the woods! But on! on! never mind him! The main body is before!

Suddenly we burst upon the dazzling light of the prairie. There they are. The whole body of them, within a quarter of a mile, strung winding along the deep grass like a great snake.

The clamor of pursuing wolves never sounded more terribly to a herd of exhausted deer than did our shout to these frightened thieves.

See how they look behind. They are uncertain what to do.

Ha! they make to the timber again. The rapid tramp of the avenger's tread turns too. They are panic-stricken. That old man, with the unearthly wildness of his mien, looks enough like a phantom of wrath to strike an army with terror.

They rush to the edge of the timber, and throw themselves, in frantic hurry, from their horses' backs—some head foremost.

We, too, have dismounted quicker than thought; the black tubes are ranged, and the beleaguering platoon hurtles a leaden hail among them before they reach the trees.

Such staggering and tumbling; but not a sound from them.

With clubbed guns we rush after the old man into the timber ; and now the struggle is hand to hand, and foot to foot, with the lithe, desperate wretches.

They turn at bay a moment behind the covert of the trunks ; but the fury of our charge overbears every thing. For a moment the rustle of struggling feet, the dull ring of crushing blows, the low groan, and heavy fall are the only sounds that break the awful silence ; and then the peal of our victorious shout proclaims that they are flying.

The pursuit is continued for some distance, but they are too swift for us ; and one after another of the members of our scattered party, panting and exhausted, make their appearance on the prairie.

"The children ! the children ! Have they been seen ?" I shouted.

"Here they are !" replied a deep voice from some distance in the woods.

We all ran in ; and never shall I forget that scene. At the foot of a large tree the old man was bending over his boy, who had been pierced by the lance of a Camanche, and lay pleading for water, writhing like a trodden worm. Little Mary, with large blue, tearless eyes that looked as if they would never wink again, stood by him, holding his hand. The shattered and bloody gun of the old man lay on the ground by him, while his nearest neighbor, a tall, powerful man, stood off, in respect for the sacredness of grief, gazing upon the group with dimmed eyes.

There was a heavy pause. The old man looked up with blood-shot eyes, saying, "Water, men ! Water ! water !"

We had all been so much shocked by the scene as to have lost our presence of mind for the moment ; but instantly, as he spoke, a dozen men sprang off and ran to where our horses had been left for their water-gourds.

The boy grasped one with a famished eagerness it is impossible

to convey, and drank copiously. In a moment the color began to return to his blue lips, and light to his glazing eyes.

This convinced me that his wound was not so desperate as we had feared. No one had examined it; for there was the lance leaning against the tree, with the red stain upon its blade for several inches; and that, we had thought, was conclusive enough.

As I was stooping to bathe his feverish temples and examine the wound, little Molly turned her quiet eyes upon my face, and said, with a solemn innocence that thrilled me strangely, "The bad Injuns wouldn't kill me!"

As if she felt that grievous injustice had been done in selecting Johnny instead of her.

I could not resist catching the little creature in my arms and kissing her, while the hot tears burned over my lids at this touching exhibition of forgetfulness of self in the sister's love.

On examination, the wound looked bad enough, to be sure. There was nothing for it, however, but to prepare a litter and get him home.

This the men soon did with twigs and the buffalo-ropes which the Indians had thrown away, together with all their arms, in the flight.

Poor little boy! his plaintive moans were very distressing. The rudest of the men, with all the flush of fight upon them, seemed to be greatly moved; and gentle Molly was carried with as considerate tenderness as if the crowns of all the world had been her heritage.

Strange, incongruous animal is man! We were stepping over the corpses of the slain. A few minutes before, these men had been wilder than starved tigers for blood, and their eyes were now moistened at the sight of these two children and their old father.

It is a custom, never deviated from by the Camanches, to kill their male prisoners, of whatever age, when they see a probability of their being retaken.

If it be a child, as in this instance, they say, with stern foresight, "It is one future warrior out of the way!" For, as their "hand

is," emphatically, "against every man, and every man's against them," all mankind are alike their enemies; but there is too much savage chivalry among them ever to kill or misuse a female prisoner, a thing they have never been known to do. They will kill them, and take their scalps in attacking a town or settlement; but when they have once spared them as prisoners, their persons are forever afterward sacred.

There is a vast deal of rude nobility about these Camanches; and if they should ever learn to use rifles well, they will be far the most formidable enemy our race have yet had to dispute the possession of territory with. That they have not yet overcome their superstitious dread of fire-arms is the sole reason why we are still able to cope with them at such disadvantages.

We learned from little Mary's story that the Indians having herself and brother in charge had, when we rushed into the timber after them—although she and her brother were standing hand-in-hand—only struck him down with the lance, and left her unmolested. "*The bad Injuns wouldn't kill me!*"

We had lost two men in the skirmish among the timber, and had several wounded. There were ten Indians that we knew to be slain. We recovered all our horses and mules, and, in addition, secured forty or fifty Indian horses, with all their quaint accoutrements. Some of these horses were noble animals, and most of them curiously and beautifully marked.

They seem to have a great fancy for pied and mottled horses. The animal which fell to my lot, in the distribution of the plunder which followed, was the most serviceable creature I ever strode, and most singularly marked with bluish-black spots, near the size of a Mexican dollar, and almost as uniform as the spots on a leopard.

Our return home was a painful blending of sadness and triumph; but it was a prodigious relief to us all when we heard, next morning, that little Johnny was doing well. Indeed, in about two months he had almost entirely recovered.

CHAPTER III.

A NEW ANNOYANCE.

By scenes such as this was our pioneer life diversified. There was never an hour when we could feel that we were entirely safe. But it would seem that man is by nature an essentially belligerent animal; for even persons of weak nerves and constitutional timidity soon learn to like, and in a short time become entirely in love with this sort of life.

This sense of uncertainty and ever-present peril comes, after a while, to afford a spicy relish to the monotony of simple existence that is exceedingly fascinating.

Philosophically considered, it is the same inherent yearning for stimuli which drives the man of civilization into all the excesses of dissipation, and finds incessantly recurring victims to the whole round of social vices.

As it is a more natural and healthy excitement than gambling and drinking, it is to vigorous natures even more absorbingly enticing than they.

It is impossible to realize how tame and flat the very highest excitements of civilized life appear to one who has lived long amid the stormy vicissitudes of a dangerous frontier.

The very assurance of security—the feeling that you are no longer dependent upon your physical prowess for the hours of your life, for food, and all personal necessities—becomes essentially irksome.

This fact strikingly illustrates the mortal agonism of the animal

and intellectual lives. The one can not be strongest but at the expense of the other ; or, at least, of the penance and mortification of its rival.

A semi-intellectual animal existence has many joys ; but it is a sort of mongrel being, a half-way life, never knowing the fierce and passionate ecstasies of the pure-hearted animal, or realizing the subtle and exquisite idealism of the intellectualist.

I fancy no middle ground. Give me the tent of the nomad, or a moon-stone palace in the gorgeous realm of the ideal.

The affair we have just detailed was a sufficient warning, and our precautionary arrangements were never permitted to fall through so entirely as to leave our settlement bare of defense again.

The lesson we taught the Indians this time was not soon forgotten ; but remote as our colony was, we soon began to experience other and more vexatious annoyances from the vagabonds of our own color.

Several rough, idle fellows made their appearance among us. No one could tell where they came from, or who they were. Their names nobody recognized, though they told very plausible stories of their lives, and the accidents which brought them among us ; but the ill effects of their presence soon began to be apparent.

Within a month there had been several serious frays, at the bottom of which these men always seemed to be. Others joined them, and they got up a sort of settlement some miles off, and lived—they could best tell how themselves—though the unaccountable disappearance of our hogs and sheep was, to say the least of it, somewhat remarkable.

At last two fine horses became suddenly invisible. Then some of our old settlers began to speak their minds very freely. The fellows were amazingly touchy and captious, and the rifle began to have a voice in the business.

Another horse disappeared ; the owner accused one of these scoundrels of stealing it, and he was soon after shot from behind a tree.

Things began to look serious. I called a council of our oldest and best men, and it was determined to give these interlopers warning to make themselves scarce in two days. They defied us, and refused to go. I called together the Rangers, and we went down to their settlement to see that our orders were enforced.

They fired on us; a desperate fight occurred, in which four of them were shot, and the other two taken prisoners and hung in ten minutes to a live-oak in their own yard. Two of our party were killed, and several desperately wounded. Here was another specimen of the spiciness of frontier life.

But such a course was inevitable. We had no judicial organization; what else could we do? Be run over rough-shod, and have our property destroyed and stolen, and our honest working-men picked off from "the bush?" It could not be expected. What judiciary could we appeal to? They would have sworn each other through the meshes of the law in the best organized courts, if we had had them in existence among us!

We knew they did the mischief; we had circumstantial proof enough to satisfy us of that; we knew, too, that their neighborhood would be in every respect fatal to the interests of our colony; and we took the law in our own hands, as we had a right to do. The remedy was a terrible one, but the disease was eradicated. Such is the stern necessitarian logic of the frontier.

The time for gathering our crops had now come, and an abundant harvest we had of it. I could scarcely realize the enormous productiveness of our fields. It appeared like the work of magic, to see those great heaps of grain and yams, the produce of a single plowing. They had only cost us about a month's work altogether, and yet were sufficient for the year's consumption.

A northern farmer, who tugs and sweats the year round, from daybreak to sunset, would be lost in amazement at realizing such overflowing returns from a few weeks' careless labor.

Our cattle we never dreamed of providing for. A little corn

for our horses, when on hard duty, was all we needed ; and then the difficulty was to learn them to eat it.

It takes a prairie horse a long time to appreciate the merits of grain. They snuff their noses at it in disdain at first, and wonder what you mean by offering them white pebbles to eat.

Having never been introduced to it in the whole course of their lives, and being accustomed to regard the prairie grass as sufficient for all sublunary wants, their teeth are necessarily astonished by such flinty pabulum.

I have often laughed heartily at observing the awkward attempts of my Indian horse to get at the merits of an ear of corn. He invariably gave it up in despair, until I shelled it for him.

The wonder is, that they will endure more hard riding, on the simple food they pick from the first spot you chance to halt at, than your corn-fed American horses. But for this fact, it would be impossible to traverse these great plains.

The Indian gets an amount of service out of his horse that is almost incredible ; yet the idea of raising grain for him never entered his cranium.

He will run a horse eighty miles a day, and at night simply take off his rigging and turn the animal loose to shift for himself till morning ; then finds him fresh as a lark, and ready for the same or greater work again. He will keep him going at this rate for three months, and then turn him free to rejuvenate, and at the end of nine weeks has to lasso him and break him over again !

These mustangs are a magnificent race of animals ; their descent is from the highest-royal lineage of Barbary ; and it is ridiculous for us to be making such a wonderment over the Arab and his steed, and endeavoring to bribe the ragged wretch, at enormous prices, to part with his better life, that we may transport it across wide seas to improve our stock at home. We have the very same animal—equal in every possible sense—wandering in herds of countless thousands over our own plains.

The Camanehe's horse, caught up from these herds, performs every day the same feats that strike us with so much astonishment when the savor of salt water is on them.

"What's in a name!" Mount a sheik on a long, sleepy-looking barb, and send him scurrying his hundreds of miles across the sands of Sahara, and *mirabile dictu!* but mount a Camanehe chief on a bony, sleepy-looking mustang, and send him down from the spurs of the Rocky Mountains, a thousand miles, to sack a Mexican town or plunder a Texan settlement, and back again, going with such speed, night and day, as to defy pursuit as perfectly as a migrating swallow would, and it is all nothing remarkable! because "British Bards and Scotch Reviewers" have neither rhymed tweedledee! or snarled tweedledum! about these particular marvels of our—with "them"—unpoetical and unpopular continent. Pish! I've a notion to turn "Native American" in disgust.

The great portion of the winter had passed with little variety of incident, and pleasantly enough, except that this very want of variety was getting to be rather irksome to my Rangers and myself. We were beginning to more than half regret that we had drubbed the poor Camanehes so severely that they had taken a distaste to our neighborhood, and to sigh most heartily for the good old times when their thieving and scalp-taking propensities had kept us in sport.

We were so lamentably reduced at last, that to have a horse stolen was a God-send; and our pent-up energies burst forth into fiery ardor in the chase of the thief; though he might turn out, when we caught him, to be a cowardly, half-starved, filthy Mexican or tribeless Indian, whose wretched carcass it was not safe to touch with the point of a quirtlash. Yet the hanging him was an *incident*, though the lariat it was done with had to be thrown away.

Incidents we were raving and raging for. There is no telling what disastrous results this state of things might have led to, had not the grateful and unexpected arrival of Major Ely, the principal

of the company, from Louisville, with a new party of emigrants, offered some alleviation.

He came to take charge of matters in person, and I, very joyfully, was relieved from my responsibility ; for it was only the sense of duty thus entailed which had prevented me long since from carrying out the scheme of an adventure which I had been hugging to my secret heart since a few months after my arrival in the country.

I was free now ; and, after having rendered up my account of my administration, which, happily, seemed to give satisfaction, I eagerly commenced preparations.

First and foremost, the " boys"—that is, the Rangers—were to be consulted, privately and individually. Broaching the matter only to those who had proved themselves, through the severe trial of their late apprenticeship, to be of " the right grit," " game to the backbone," and " true as steel," I met with very prompt sympathy from them ; for they, unfortunate fellows, were about as near being " bored" to death by the sleepy times we had endured for a while back as I myself ; and, wild as the scheme was, they responded, to a man, with just the sort of relish I desired to see.

The proposed adventure was, shortly, this : There is an old legend floating among the hunters and trappers of the southwest, that a number of very rich gold mines were formerly worked by the Spaniards in the mountains, near the sources of the Red River, in the northwestern part of Texas proper.

I had heard this story from a great many different narrators ; and there were certain features of consistency common to it, in every recital, which had struck me as somewhat curious.

For instance, they all agreed that the location of the principal mine was in the Dividing Ridge, between the head waters of the Rio Puerco and those of the North Canadian. That the peak, El Pico, was the most conspicuous in a hundred miles.

That it was and could be only reached from the south, through

a most remarkable valley that seemed to have been formed by the sudden rending apart of a huge mountain chain, which left steep and square-faced palisades on either side to guard this approach to the sacred mine.

That several persons, who had been taken prisoners by the Camanches at different periods, and carried off to this region, and afterward escaped, had brought back accounts of having seen this peak. That a number of shafts sunk by the miners, and the furnaces, were still remaining, with the tools and crucibles lying around them.

That the Camanches had always given them to understand that here gold had been obtained in great quantities; and, indeed, had shown them large lumps of the pure metal, which, they said, had come from those pits.

Gold is, somehow, connected with their superstitions; and they will never remove it from their villages, or sell it to the traders, for fear of offending the Great Spirit, to whom they consider it as sacred. They, therefore, will neither use it themselves, nor permit others to take it off.

But all these accounts, coming from different quarters, agree in asserting that there is a large quantity of the bullion among them, the origin of which is all referred to this peak:

Several expeditions had been undertaken for the purpose of reaching this famous place, all of which had been defeated; for, to get to it, it was necessary to pass through the very heart of the Camanche country, and the adventurers had always been driven back by swarms of Indians the moment it became evident, from the direction taken, that their object was to reach this mountain.

The Indians seemed to be fiercely jealous of white men approaching it. They have associated gold with the evil power of the pale race, and consider that it is only by sacrilegious defiance and robbery of the Great Spirit that they have obtained it; and

that so long as they guard this great deposit will they be secure from the dreaded encroachments upon their country.

Now there was just enough of romance in this legend to have attracted my curiosity to it, simply as a legend, for the purpose of observing how nearly it would retain the same general features in the great variety of channels through which it reached me.

But it happened that this very old man, Hicks, had been taken prisoner by them, and carried to the very spot designated in this legend ; walked over the sides of the mountain ; seen the furnaces and found a broken crucible, with a quantity of the ore half melted in the bottom of it.

He said that the Camanches accounted for this fact, and the general appearance of the furnaces, with the tools lying about them, as if the workmen had suddenly deserted them, by saying that the Spaniards had been attacked by their fathers many moons ago, while at work, and driven off or killed on the spot, at the suggestion of a great prophet among them, who said that they were bringing down the wrath of the Great Spirit upon the tribes by this robbery of the sacred metal. And they said, besides, that the things had been left just as the Spaniards dropped them, no Indian daring to touch or make use of them in any way.

The old man, Hicks, like all these rovers of the wilderness, was very taciturn ; and nobody in the settlement knew a syllable of this feature of his past history, until my agency and sympathy in the affair of rescuing the children had attracted him to me. Then he related this, among other remarkable incidents of his life, at intervals, when I could succeed in drawing him from his silence into a communicative mood.

This singular and unexpected confirmation of what had before been interesting to me merely as a vague romance forcibly arrested and enlisted my imagination. I dwelt upon its details with such careful minuteness, that the conviction finally took fast hold upon me that, with the assistance of the old hunter, I could succeed in

reaching this place and satisfying my curiosity, if not in opening the way to a very important enterprise, which might result not alone in securing my private fortune, but in discoveries of vast importance to civilization.

As the iron frame of the old man was still unshaken, and I found, on feeling the pulse of his humor, that it beat as vigorously and wildly as ever at the very mention of daring adventure, I formed the settled resolution to undertake an expedition to this perilous mountain at the very earliest practicable period.

That time had now come.

I had had this in view in endeavoring to acquire the confidence of and influence over my Rangers. Now it told upon them; and I had only to disclose my designs to secure at once their hearty and extravagant assurance that they "would follow me through fire and water to the devil!" As I was in no hurry to forestall the future, I was very well contented that they should only follow me to El Pico.

Our preparations were made and completed privately; for I did not wish to encounter all the prudential remonstrances which I knew would follow upon the announcement of our design.

Indeed, there was very little preparation to make; for a frontiersman, with his buckskin suit, pistols, rifle, and knife, is always ready, if you give him plenty of ammunition, to go wherever his horse is able to carry him.

He certainly, of all men, most religiously observes the Biblical precept, "Think not of what ye shall eat, or what ye shall wear for the morrow!" As long as he can use his rifle he has no apprehension on these scores, and never dreams of cumbering himself with any thing in the shape of luggage; therefore we were soon ready.

D

CHAPTER IV.

THE START.

ON the day before we were to start the thing leaked out; and long, loud, and pithy were the exhortations and entreaties dinged into our ears by the steadfast and sober-sided wiseacres of the settlement.

“It was a silly, wild-goose chase”—“We would all lose our scalps”—“It was worse than madness!” and so on *ad infinitum*.

But all was of no avail; we were resolved upon it; go we *would*, and go we *did*, at daybreak next morning.

I left Major Ely quite provoked at my obduracy. Poor fellow! I hear that he is since dead. Peace be with his ashes! He was a generous and enterprising man, and deserved a better fate than to die of an acclimating fever just while success was crowning his laborious efforts to establish the colony permanently.

We numbered ten men in all; well armed, and splendidly mounted; and I think I never heard a shout more indicative of reckless joyousness than ours as we turned our horses' heads to the north, and set off in a gallop across the plains on the morning of the 12th of January, 1839.

I question whether any exploring expedition, great or small, ever contained so many men peculiarly fitted for the enterprise, in proportion to the number, as ours. Besides old Hicks and myself, there were eight as bold, skillful, and daring rangers as ever threw leg over horse, or cracked a rifle at a redskin.

The two brothers, James and Adolphus Larry—more familiarly known as Jim Larry and Dolphin Larry—were persons upon whom I depended a great deal. The first of these was about thirty-two, and the latter twenty-nine years of age.

Jim had seen a great deal of hard fighting in his day, both with Mexicans and the Indian tribes on the borders. He was, however, perfectly honest, and never had been known to tell a lie. "Jest as true as if Jim Larry had sed it," was one of the highest endorsements for truth known in the colony.

Dolphin, his brother, was not of the same temperament, and although he seemed honest enough, and not, apparently, a liar with intention to deceive, yet he was fond of telling long yarns at the camp-fire, and of boastfully mystifying his brother, whose simple nature was easily credulous of Dolphin's stories.

Dolphin had been something of a sailor in his day, and represented to me that he had made a voyage to Havre; but I thought there was good reason, from what dropped from him occasionally, for supposing that he had made much longer voyages, and, indeed, spent nearly his whole life at sea. Of course, his opinion on sea matters—when these were discussed—was never controverted, and if any unlucky wight differed from him, down would come a torrent of sea phrases about "sky-scrapers" and "moon-rakers," "main-top" and "fore-yard," that would overwhelm the disbeliever. Both these men were of tried courage, and, I had reason to believe, of equal fidelity. I believe they were originally from Pittsburg, in Pennsylvania.

Jack Landwell, as he was called by our party, and Landeville as he called himself, was a Frenchman by birth, whose real name, thus ridiculously corrupted, was probably Jacques l'Entville, or something similar. Of his own early history he knew little, but that little greatly stimulated any curiosity to know more.

He was now apparently in the prime of manhood, and remembered much of the early history of New Orleans and Louisiana

before the purchase by the United States. His father, as near as he could recollect, had been a person of birth and standing, probably one of the decayed *noblesse*, who visited the New World under the tacit encouragement of the French government, glad enough to get rid of them, as they to escape the tender mercies of Monsieur Guillotine.

Jack had been taken away by an Indian of the Cherokees, who had been affronted in some way, and had revenged himself on the father by stealing the child.

Among the Cherokees he remained until he was about twenty, when, having brained his foster-father in a quarrel, he had escaped to the whites. Since then he had lived the roving life of a free hunter. Yet he treasured one relic with the devotion which an Indian would pay to his mystery-bag. This was a small, but exquisitely carved crucifix of solid gold, which, from its workmanship alone, must have been of great value. The expression of agony on the Savior's face was most admirably effective, and the anatomy of the limbs and body wonderfully correct.

Nothing would induce him to part with this, which he kept in a little buckskin case, suspended around his neck by the antique and massive chain of gold belonging to it. He had come to the colony a week before we started, on a visit to old Hicks, whose follower, friend, and comrade he had been nearly four fifths of the time since he ran away from the Cherokees, and he had entered willingly into our scheme.

Terence Barry was an Irishman, a wit, and a general favorite. He was very expert at cooking, was a capital shot, and never out of spirits. Our party would have been incomplete without his presence.

Sandy Ferguson, a gigantic and good-humored fellow, of Scotch descent; William Gallagher, his cousin; John K. Thompson, a Yankee from Massachusetts; and John Wickliffe, originally from Cincinnati, made up the rest of our party. They were all men

of the right sort for this thing ; and the two Johns, especially, did not care for old Nick himself, if he came in the shape of a Camanche.

We rode on in fine spirits, laughing and joking, and for some time without any thing of note. About noon, however, Gallagher, who was riding a little behind, galloped up, and informed us that a single Camanche, with a long buffalo robe sailing out behind his shoulders, and a gun, was in full pursuit of us. As this was a strange temerity, we halted for him to come up.

To our astonishment, we found it to be one of the colony men, Doctor Martin, who had come on with Major Ely. We burst into a fit of laughter as he rode up to us, both at the mistake of Gallagher and at the costume of the doctor, which was odd enough in all conscience.

Doctor Martin was from a good family at Philadelphia ; had graduated at one of the eastern colleges, and afterward received the diploma of Doctor of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. His restless disposition would not let him remain quiet any where, and he turned actor, and traveled over the West with a theatrical company.

At length, after many queer adventures, he found himself at the Trinity colony, where his knowledge of medicine made him at last valuable.

The only remnant left of his player finery was a black velvet cloak, from which the pile had been nearly all worn ; and this was now fastened around his neck, the loose ends fluttering and streaming out behind like a piratical flag, as he rode. His bear-skin cap was garnished with feathers, and his hunting-shirt decorated with rows of pins, used for the purpose of impaling upon his cap any insects he might catch ; for he was an entomologist and naturalist in general.

In his hand he held an air-gun, an instrument which was then entirely disused, and almost forgotten by civilization, though at

the time of its discovery it had created an immense excitement. The doctor, besides his other accomplishments, had dabbled much in experimental chemistry, and had become quite a proficient in what was still the "Black Art" to simple frontiersmen. He had taken up the old model and theory of the air-gun, which had been thrown aside as too cumbersome and complex for practical purposes, and, after a year or two spent in experiments at Cincinnati, had succeeded in convincing himself that he had so simplified the application of the machinery necessary to the condensation of air, that the principle could be efficiently applied to small arms under all the exigencies of the rudest service. He had, accordingly, perfected his invention or improvement in a rifle; and, after securing the patent at home, came out to the frontier with the determination of testing its efficiency at all personal hazards. He had not heard our adventure until we were under way, and had followed us on the instant with characteristic restlessness. He expressed his determination to accompany us, and neither our persuasion nor threats could deter him. We finally gave in, and with no very good grace agreed to retain what we could not but regard as a sure burden.

At the close of the day we camped in the timber, near the head waters of the Trinity. As the process of camping is constantly repeated throughout our journey, I will describe it now, to save future trouble. In selecting a camp-ground, water is the first object. When that is found in abundance, then reference is to be had to the quality of grass for our animals.

Wood is of little importance, for the air of this region is so bland that we need no fire for our personal comfort; and as to cooking, hunters know how to live on jerked beef and venison. Besides, on expeditions through a country traversed by Indians, the smoke of a fire is rather a dangerous beacon, which our enemies would know how to interpret, and which is visible at an immense distance in that singularly clear atmosphere.

We built one that night, however, as we had little to apprehend so soon.

Immediately after dismounting, every man "staked out" his horse, or, in other words, led him into the prairie by the long lariat of platted raw-hide which always hangs coiled at the saddle-bow, and dug a hole with his knife, into which the knotted end was thrust, refilled the hole, and stamped the earth hard down with his feet. The other end being around the horse's neck, gives him some twenty paces, round a center, to graze in.

This done, a portion of the party went in search of wood; another to the stream, to fill the water-gourds; and the third, with the rifles, in search of a turkey or some other titbit which might be lurking in the neighborhood; while Terence Barry, or Blinking Teddy, as we called him, who had been appointed cook, went into the adjoining thicket to cut forks and sharpen sticks to make spits with, and, having found these, kindled the fire, and prepared for coffee and roast—coffee being a luxury, by-the-by, expected to last but a few days.

By the time dark came on, all hands were collected about the fire, observing Teddy's preparations with most affectionate solicitude. "The broth of a boy" became forthwith the despot and hero of the circle. Even the unfagging quiddities of the "cracked doctor," as Martin had been christened, failed to dispute ascendancy with him for the time.

Teddy saved all his brilliancy for this occasion, fully appreciating the advantage his position gave him. His curious leer and broad witticisms were sure to carry the laugh, savored as they were by the pleasant steam of the meat roasting under his dextrous supervision.

A rivalry forthwith sprung up between Blinking Teddy and Martin, as the wits of the party. Martin's star always paled before Teddy's fire while the cooking was under way; but the doctor's shone in the ascendent when we were "dieted to his humor."

Your old hunter is a rare epicure. Let him alone for selecting the choice cuts from the carcass of a deer or bear, and having it "done brown," after the best impromptu style.

Teddy was certainly a genius, and deservedly popular. After the discussion of his good things, we were in better mood for those of Martin; and certainly a more fantastic humorist than he never enlivened a camp-fire. In addition to the eccentricities of his costume and taste, and that exhaustless theme, the air-gun, he would rattle away till our sides would ache from laughter, with the most comical stories of his multifarious adventures in the "States," accompanying the recital with the grotesque illustrations of gesture in which his old calling of actor fitted him for excelling.

Reclining in careless groups on our blankets, an hour would go by merrily. Then it would be time to bring in our horses and secure them in a circle close around us, for fear of a visit from the Indians; and now stretching our blankets upon the grass, with a saddle for a pillow, were soon in the land of dreams.

The first thing at daybreak in the morning was to lead the horses to water and stake them out again, to graze while breakfast was being prepared and discussed. That necessary preliminary through with, and our arms looked to, then came the saddling up and starting; old Sam Hicks leading, as the guide, and the rest, with little regard to discipline, following in whatever order was accidentally assumed.

There was an exception to all rules, especially in the cracked doctor, who never, by any sort of accident, was found any where except far behind, or straggling right or left from the line of march.

As apt as any way, he would get to chasing a butterfly or horned frog, and so fall a mile or so behind. I tried to frighten him out of such eccentric habits, by telling him that he would find himself cut off from the party some day by the Indians. But I soon found that it was difficult to make him appreciate fear of any kind. In-

deed, the singular animal never seemed to make this discovery fairly but once, through all the perils we passed.

Our course to-day was parallel with the Cross Timber, and almost under its shadows; for we skirted along its edges, merely keeping in the prairie for the convenience of our horses.

We were never out of sight of deer. Groups of them were constantly in view, sometimes in herds of several hundred. The neighborhood of this line of timber seems to be a favorite resort; and, after feeding to repletion on the prairie, they would retire about noon to lie down in the shade; so that at any moment we could see them either peering out from among the trees on the right of us, or taking a hearty stare from some green knoll on the left.

As I have invariably noticed to be the case where deer are abundant, the number of wolves was immense; and the doctor amused himself every now and then—not a little to the discomfort of his mustang—by chasing the sneaking rascals into the timber, and occasionally doubling one up by a silent messenger from his ever-ready air-gun.

The hunters were astonished at the effects of this—to them—ridiculous weapon, and a few hours had only passed before the doctor, and what they had nicknamed his "funny pop-gun," had risen a hundred per cent. in their estimation.

Just before night he killed a large black wolf, and came into camp, after we were all dismounted, wearing its bushy tail for a plume in place of his discarded feathers. He was greeted with shouts of laughter, as his odd appearance deserved; but I was amused by the curiosity with which the men examined his weapon, and made their comments. After supper, the fun was heightened when this oddity very gravely proceeded to display his acquisitions in specimens of natural history, drawing successively from his capacious pockets a centipede, a horned frog, and a handful of snails, with sundry bugs, butterflies, &c., and displaying them by the light of the fire upon his blanket. The party gathered around him

upon such occasions, and greeted each specimen with yells of laughter.

He always favored us, with a solemn unction that would have gone to the heart of Sir David Banks, by giving what purported to be the scientific name of each ; and science was not discredited so far as words went, though I would not like to vouch much for their appositeness.

It became a regular joke to call upon the doctor at night "to show up ;" and his ceremonious disgorgement always furnished something new, and new matter for fun.

THE JOURNAL.

I will now commence with extracts from my journal of our daily progress, so far as I have been able to preserve its sheets through the disastrous emergencies of our perilous journeyings. This fragment must, of necessity, be imperfect, written as it was, sometimes by fire-light, often by moon-light, and occasionally in the saddle.

CHAPTER V.

JOURNAL CONTINUED.

JANUARY 14.—Our course to-day continued nearly parallel with the Cross Timber. The first fifteen miles was over level and very rich prairie; the deer in astonishing numbers; the surface more broken in the evening—sandy—covered with coarse, thin grass.

We passed many flocks of sandy-hill cranes—blue—standing six feet high. Very comical-looking gentry they were, strutting back and forth on the sides of the low ridges; every moment or two enunciating a harsh, sudden croak, that jars like a pistol-shot on the ear in this dry atmosphere.

The doctor was greatly tickled at the solemn, mysterious gestures they made with their long necks, and, borrowing a shot-gun, tried very hard to kill one. We could hear his shot rattle among their feathers, like pebbles thrown against the shingle roof of a barn by the boys; but it seemed as if they were all feathers, for they invariably carried their slim carcasses sailing off. The doctor swore they were nothing but legs, neck, and wings, and thought the souls of deceased dandies must inhabit them.

We camped to-night at a small spring, on the edge of the Timber, much trampled by animals. It was difficult to get any clear water. Old Hicks and Gallagher brought in a fine turkey apiece. The doctor pinned the long beard of the gobbler to the top of his cap for a tassel. This made it a showy affair, with the wolf's tail. He produced several new "specimens" of beetles, &c. Made, we think, twenty-five miles.

January 15.—Scattering ridges again ; here and there a post-oak. The burrows of sand-rats make the traveling difficult. Horses sink above the fetlock every step or two into them. For twenty miles they furrow the ground in every conceivable direction, raising small tumuli, with ridges, such as moles make, between them.

Though we trampled over millions of them, I did not see one ; for, warned by the tread of our horses, they disappeared before we came in view. The doctor was greatly worried at this. He had seen nothing yet but half a dozen tails as their owners whisked into the holes, and he was determined to have a good look at them.

We left him standing on the prairie, like a heron in a fish-pond, looking down at the ground. After dusk he joined us in camp, announcing formally that he had made a great, a tremendous discovery, which would immortalize him among naturalists.

It turned out that, after standing still as a tree for an hour, watching, one of them had come to the mouth of its hole to peep, and he had discovered that sand-rats have "striped noses" as well as tails !

We camped in the timber to-night ; plenty of good water ; good grass was scarce, and we had to scatter the horses to some distance. Ferguson brought in a fine doe.

We saw a flock of turkeys flying up to roost a short distance off. Dolphin, Larry, and Gallagher went after them. We heard the heavy thump of the birds' fall as distinctly as the crack of the rifles. They were very fat ; great roast ! About the same distance was made as during yesterday.

January 16.—Sand-rat country again to-day. I am more and more convinced that the Cross Timber is a work of art. The growth, since we entered these sterile sand-ridges, is the same we observed as peculiar to it while its course lay through rich bottoms and across level prairie. It is not quite so tall nor so large

here ; but the trees are the same, nearly all of them the *peculiar* growth of low lands along the margin of streams.

It looks as unnatural to me, and as much contrary to the order of vegetation exhibited every where else in this country, to see these trees growing here on soil like this, as it would be to see a stream running up hill.

They must certainly have been planted and nourished by some lost and far-remote nation which peopled this mighty plain, and desired to establish a permanent line of defense or demarkation between its own territory and that of a restless neighbor. How natural such an idea in a country destitute of stone !

The doctor thought the sand-rats must have planted it, if they were any more numerous in those days than now. The solution of this mystery may well puzzle more sober brains than his.

We saw some white cranes to-day. These are magnificent-looking birds, and seem to be much larger than the blue cranes. Audubon thinks the blue are the young birds. If so, it is strange that they should be so much more numerous ; and, to judge by the way they stand being shot at, one would infer they must be old and tough as " Job's turkey !"

The doctor came galloping into camp to-night, shouting like a madman, and whirling in triumph about his head the carcass of a sand-rat. He had succeeded in shooting one, after patient watching for a long time.

The old hunters considered this as quite a feat ; for *their* rendering of the meaning of "*seeing the elephant*" was getting a fair look at one of these " artful dodgers" of the prairie. They look something like the common chip squirrel, except that their bodies are broader, and their fore paws formed very short and strong for burrowing. They undoubtedly have "*striped noses*."

But the joke of the day was the doctor's disastrous attempt at adding a scorpion to his collection of specimens.

He was turning over a chunk of decayed wood which had been

brought for the fire, and saw one of these curious reptiles clinging to its under surface.

Not knowing what it was, he deliberately picked it up in his fingers, to drop it again with a sudden bound and cry of pain.

The sting of these creatures is very dangerous, and horribly painful; but Teddy rushed to his relief with a truly backwoods' remedy. I thought he was going to bite the finger off, as he seized the poor fellow's hand and clapped it into his wide mouth. After sucking it steadily for a little while, he released it; then cleansing his mouth with water, he turned to the relieved and astonished doctor with the most irresistibly comic leer out of that same eye of his, and said, quietly, "Its little fut was hot, was it?"

I thought the whole party would have gone into convulsions at this quizzical conclusion to what might have been an ugly scene.

Sucking the wound instantly is the most prompt and efficient remedy known for the bite or sting of reptiles. The poison is thus extracted before it gets into the circulation; but to do it requires a great deal of nerve in the operator, and few persons could be found who would risk it, though the Indians all do it without a moment's hesitation. But Teddy deserved, and received a great deal of credit for his heroism, and grew to even a greater "lion" than ever.

The doctor became a good deal tamed by the suddenness of the thing, and suffered from a slight degree of nausea; but the loss to him of his appetite for supper, and to us of his jokes until bedtime, were, thanks to Teddy's gallantry, all the ill effects that came of it.

The men reported buffalo in sight late this evening. We shall have sport to-morrow. Bad water to-night.

January 17.—Old Hicks led off to the northwest to-day, leaving the Cross Timber on the right to a considerable distance. High, rolling prairie, and very rich. Nothing was to be seen before us but one wide ocean of grass, bounded by the sky.

There is something very awful in this great, silent expanse. The being of God and an infinite universe can be realized here.

About twelve o'clock the dark line of the south fork of Red River Timber began to loom on the horizon ; black blotches began to be visible on the surface before us. In an hour or two we made out that they were herds of buffalo, moving on in the same direction with us. We passed within a mile of one small herd, but had no time to go to it.

Hicks said we must reach the Red River, or do without water ; so we kept going steadily on. An hour after, we saw the ripple of water gleam in the moonlight from the deep shadows of the forest : a welcome sight ! We were all tired ; for we had ridden nearly forty miles since sunrise, and were glad enough to stop and get to sleep as soon as possible.

January 18.—A bright, delicious morning. We were waked in high spirits by the lowing of a herd of buffalo, which seemed to have a serious notion to walk over us. They looked very innocent, crowding and pushing each other, and bellowing, with steaming nostrils, not a hundred paces off ; but we soon let them know they were in an uncomfortable neighborhood.

In the shortest possible time we were mounted and among them, banging away at their huge carcasses, and getting up a tremendous roaring, shouting, and shaking of the earth between us ; for even a small herd of a few hundred, as this was, make the solid crust of things to tremble again when, thoroughly panic-stricken, they once get fairly under way for sundown.

After a delirium of something like twenty minutes, during which, I suppose, I was guilty of any amount of extravagances in the way of furious spurring, miscellaneous firing and yelling, I drew up my horse ; but saw, before I turned, above, and in the very midst of the dark, headlong tumult of horns and hair, the figure of the doctor, his Hamlet cloak sailing out behind him at about the same angle to the zenith with their fright-stiffened tails,

seeming to be hurried wildly on by the impetus of their madness or his own, it was hard to tell which.

For a moment or two I was perfectly confounded by wonderment as to what had become of all the slain, after so much shooting and hurrah; but my sober senses came to my relief, and reminded me that few animals are ever obtained in a helter-skelter sally, such as ours had been.

The hunter must select his animal, and follow him up perseveringly with repeated shots until he falls. No single shot in a thousand, made by a man at full speed from off his horse, will kill a buffalo. Firing at different animals, as we did, each time, was a wanton waste of lead; but we were not in need of meat, and felt like making a frolic out of the surprise of our unwieldy and astonished visitors.

The wind set toward us, and their usual sagacity had failed to detect our scent, until they had blundered close upon us.

Old Hicks, Gallagher, and Teddy had been more cool, and we had, after all, a fine, juicy hump steak for breakfast. The doctor came in about the time it was ready, puffing, sweating, and swearing, in huge astonishment, that not one of the half dozen he had shot would wait to be skinned.

We crossed the south fork of Red River. The stream was narrow and rapid, and the water a dark, rusty color, though pleasant enough to drink if you shut your eyes. Our course bearing west of north, over broken prairie, diversified by clumps or motts of scrubby growth. Saw squads of animals a great distance off, which looked like young deer, darting with wonderful swiftness across these openings. Hicks says they are antelopes. They seem to be very wild. We camped at a little pond of dirty water.

January 19.—Prairie more open to-day. Before we left the motts, we came suddenly upon a herd of full five hundred mustangs, feeding in a small meadow covered with young Gama grass.

The motts were clustered round it very thick, and we were within two hundred yards of them before they heard or saw us. As we rode, all at once, into the open ground, an old stud sounded the alarm with a neigh like a trumpet-blast. They were all in a cluster feeding, with their heads down.

In an instant, at the sound, it looked like a sea of heads and manes tossing in the air. Pausing a second for a glimpse at us, they burst away like a tornado broken loose, snorting and running against each other. In less time than you could think they had disappeared among the motts. The suddenness with which that little meadow was vacated appeared to be the effect of some powerful necromancy.

I noticed that, frightened as they were, no one of them ran into the bush. They scattered off on all sides, through the openings between the motts. Camanches and mustangs have, alike, an invincible horror of the bush. I had never obtained so close a view of so large a body of them before.

The first peculiarity of their appearance which caught my eye was the predominance of white. Then the incalculable diversity of marks and mottles on this ground. The famous patriarchal "coat of many colors" seems to be "all the go" among these wild gentry!

The old stallion who had given the alarm and the doctor had quite an affair.

These sultans of the herds are very fearless, and, while their frightened seraglios are flying, always linger far in the rear, between them and pursuit, and have frequently been known to impede lasso hunters, and prevent their success, by running across the track of their horses, kicking at them, and biting at the hunters themselves!

The doctor saw the grand old fellow prancing along between the motts very slowly, as if he were half inclined not to go at all, and, helter-skelter, as usual, rushed his mustang at him.

The mustang's reminiscences of the character of these fierce old despots, as they had been scored upon his ribs while he had been a "free denizen" of the wilds, taught him a little more prudence than the doctor possessed. He avoided the salient heels with which the veteran met this charge with so sudden a shy, that the doctor lost his balance and was pitched forward of the saddle, dropping his precious air-gun; he was only prevented from coming to the earth by hugging desperately, with legs and arms, round his mustang's neck. It, frightened and plunging, made for our party, for protection from the stud, which, with ears laid back, followed close at his heels, biting his rump at every bound.

In this way he came staving into the midst of our party. Gallagher fired his pistol at the stud and drove him off, while the mustang, by a sudden effort, eased the doctor over his head among the feet of our horses. We were all so much paralyzed by laughter that his mustang came near escaping entirely; but the Scotchman brought him up after a sharp race, while the poor doctor, followed by peal after peal of merriment, went back after his gun. That recovered, he soon got over his discomfiture, and we set out again in a fine mood.

We passed a wide prairie, with buffalo in view on every side; antelopes frequently seen, but always running.

I had a great curiosity to kill some of them; but had as soon expect to get within gun-shot of a comet or shooting star. Hicks says the Indians have been hunting here lately, which accounts in some degree for their shyness.

We crossed the plain, reached a long chain of motts before dusk, and camped by a clear, beautiful little lake or pond. With patriarchal live-oaks drooping their white beards for a canopy over us, we slept sweetly.

January 20.—Game appeared so abundant, that we concluded to stop here to-day and prepare a fresh supply of, jerked meat. Hicks, four men, the doctor, and myself set off at daybreak to get

a buffalo, and have an antelope hunt. The others remained in camp to prepare fires, and so on, for curing the meat.

We had gone but a little while when we saw three straggling buffalo. Old Hicks led us to the windward of them, so that we were pretty close before they took the alarm. Then we had it, hurry-scurry, over the island-dotted plain.

The speed of locomotion these clumsy-looking, heavy-headed creatures displayed is perfectly astonishing. They seemed as if they were going to pitch over on their noses every instant ; for they run with heads low and tails stuck straight out into the air, and a stiff-jointed, reeling gait ; but they do lumber over an unaccountable number of superficial feet in a given second.

It takes a good horse to bring you alongside, and confounded good riding to keep you in the saddle when you get there ; for such a dodge-ification as has to be kept up is rather perplexing to one's centrifugal aversions, which makes maintaining the "balance of power" rather a ticklish maneuver.

When you have to "chassez"—"balancez all"—manage your horse—fire your gun—dispose of that—draw your pistols—fire them—look out for "side-wipes"—fall back and load—gallop up alongside again—get close enough to almost touch its broad, hairy back with the muzzle—fire again—wheel off at a tangent—at him again—look sharp lest his horns and your shins get too closely acquainted (all this going at the rate of a mile in less than three minutes, over all sorts of ground, into gullies, up hill or down hill, for three or four miles) : then it is rather fortunate if your horse does not fall and pitch you over his head, and the bellowing monster rip your buckskins for you as he sends you vaulting over his tail ; or, at best, waddle off and leave you your bruises for your pains ; you picking yourself up and looking very sheepish after your horse, who is frisking his heels at you on his way to join the nearest herd of mustangs !

Rather a rude business, on the whole, is buffalo hunting.

Withal, we killed a fine young bull in a short time, and dispatched a man back to camp with such portions of it as were suitable for jerking, wrapped in the skin and swung over his horse. Here we got up an extempore breakfast—no thanks to honest Blinkey—and gave our horses a good rest, preparatory to the antelope hunt we were to undertake, according to the instructions of Old Hicks.

The doctor had behaved very well in the buffalo drive, except that he tried to throw his Hamlet cloak over the horns of the animal, "To blind him," he said, "as the matadore in a Spanish bullfight does the bull," and came near getting his horse gored in the characteristic experiment.

CHAPTER VI.

THE JOURNAL.

WE promised ourselves to have some rare antics out of the doctor in the wild chase we were going upon ; for the hard running we should have to do was just suited to his headlong humor. But soon after our start, much to my annoyance, I missed him, and, looking back, saw him dismounted, stooping and peering around a little clump of timber. Some new specimen hunting freak, I supposed ; and knowing it would be useless to attempt to call him off, we rode on.

Within an hour we saw a fine flock of antelopes.

And now commenced the most exciting of prairie sports. We managed in this way.

We were six men ; the man who had gone to camp with the buffalo having returned. The first object, after their discovery, was to get the party on every side of them, though we were half a mile apart, and no one nearer than a quarter of a mile of them.

One of the men then showed himself, and quick as light they darted off in the opposite direction. There a man showed himself, and the timid things would dart off at another angle, to be frightened by the same apparition in that quarter. They now became confused ; and as the effect of their fright, on seeing one of us, was always to rebound them in a straight line exactly in the opposite direction, we could form a correct estimate, from the moment of their wheeling on this side of the ring, what point on the other they were going to make for, and by riding with great speed,

so as to present one's self in front of them there again, the man opposite would drive them back at another angle. They invariably crossed near the center from which they started.

We were thus enabled to play shuttlecock with them through their fears, and keep them dashing for several hours across the same circumference of a mile or so, until they were worried down, and we could gradually close upon them.

Their movements were so inconceivably rapid that it required great exertions of speed and activity, in dashing back and forth, on the part of our horses, to keep up this game.

The excitement became intense as we neared them gradually, they becoming more and more confused and electric in their action, darting here and there, always in a body, and wheeling again when we crossed the line of their course, though at several hundred yards, and making back for the center, as if that spot were charmed.

You will perceive that if, instead of wheeling square on the opposite line, they had merely deviated slightly from the original direction—as deer or any other animals would have done—they must have escaped directly; but, by playing thus cruelly upon the very vividness of their fright, after nearly two hours' tremendous work, we had them standing, huddled and panting, in the center of a ring of about a hundred yards.

We now dismounted, and commenced deliberately firing into the squad. We did not fire all at once, but I first; the man opposite next; and so, whichever way they headed. We thus fired two rounds into them before even, in their case, despair became bold, and they rushed by us.

They are exceedingly dangerous when they make this break. The hair on their backs stood up like bristles, and they charged in a body on the poor horse of the Scotchman, which happened to be standing across the line of the course they had chosen, and ripped his haunches severely as they went by with their small, sharp

horns. They left seven of their number behind, though. We took what we needed of them, and set out for the camp.

Such is the method of that most curious of all sports, "ringing antelopes."

Though the action of these animals is surpassingly graceful, and almost bird-like, yet they are not so poetically handsome, on a close survey, as I had expected to see them.

The outline, like that of all very swift animals, is too angular for our ideas of beauty. Indeed, they looked most like a tall, fine specimen of the goat, as they in reality are.

We got into camp early, and found the process of "jerking" fully under way. The buffalo had been cut up into long, thin slices, about the width of your two fingers. These had been laid across a scaffolding of poles over slow fires, and, after drying there a while, removed and hung on the surrounding bushes, to be dried by the sun and air. The curing is thus very rapidly completed; for such is the singular dryness and preservative qualities of this atmosphere, that a bulk of fresh meat will lie about the camp for several days without becoming tainted, when no grain of salt has touched it; indeed, the use of salt is never thought of for curing our meat.

The doctor came in about sundown, and threw at our feet, with a great air of triumph, the carcass of a brown badger, which he claimed to be a new variety.

So here was the secret of his desertion. He had seen this fellow slide into its hole in the mott, and, stopping behind a tree, had watched nearly all day until it came out, when he shot it. He deserves vast credit for his indomitable patience, at any rate. Our festoons of meat were gathered up before the dew fell, and covered with skins to protect them from it.

Such an infernal serenade of wolves as we are having I never heard before. The scent of meat has drawn them from all quarters!

January 21.—Not off to-day until the afternoon. The scoun-

drelly wolves "chaw'd" the lariats of several of our horses during the night. It took us all the morning to catch them.

These wretches are much in the habit of doing this; and the wonder is they have not been at it heretofore. I suppose their teeth became so much whetted by the tantalizing odor of good things which were out of their reach that they were obliged to find some employment for them; and the raw-hide of our lariats, as they probably thought, was better than their own nails.

The doctor's mustang was among the missing; and when we recovered him, the owner swore he meant to have his revenge before night, and pistol one of the marauders.

Some time after we started, I noticed two large yellow wolves were sneaking after us on our trail. I pointed them out to him; and, handing me his air-gun, he borrowed my holsters—for they are more convenient in this kind of chase—and, putting spurs to his horse, turned toward them.

They stooped, crouching and staring at him doubtfully, until he got pretty close, and then with a quick bound dashed off in opposite directions. He selected the one which made for the open prairie; and had a hard chase after him in full view of us.

In about a mile he had closed within a few paces, and the wolf squatted flat upon the ground; as his horse leaped over him, the doctor gave him the contents of one pistol. Flirting its bushy tail in the air—for it was struck—the wolf was up and off again on the back track, and, before the doctor could rein up and turn, had considerably the start, so that they were nearly back to us before he closed on it again.

This time the doctor stooped from the saddle and held the pistol within a few inches of its head, as it lay flat on its belly, and, firing, killed it dead.

We gave him a cheer, while he sprang from his horse to get the "brush," as he always did, and came whooping and waving it over his head to join us. "The rogues sha'n't bother my lariat

with impunity," he said, as he fell quietly into line. So our sports run. Camped at good water.

January 22.—Our day's march has been over high, ridgy prairie, with a scattering growth of musquit timber in the valleys, and here and there a solitary live-oak hung, as usual, with moss. The nopal, a species of cactus, was to be seen occasionally in small patches.

Here we saw the great-eared rabbit, one of the swiftest animals, as the hunters say, in the world. They are thrice the weight and size of the common rabbit, with silvery white sides, and ears enormously disproportioned.

As soon as we saw the first one, Old Hicks mentioned the fact of their remarkable speed. My curiosity was excited to test this. Very soon one of them bounced up from behind a cluster of nopal, within a few paces of us. My horse was very fast; I could easily catch a deer in a mile's race on him. I instantly struck off after the rabbit. He had not more than ten paces the start, so that it was a fair test. It seemed to me that he almost doubled the distance between himself and my horse—the latter going at the best gait he knew—every few moments; and I never was more surprised.

It appeared to be shod with wings instead of feet, moving, in long bounds, with such incalculable ease and speed over the wide, undulating plains, that it reminded me of a white gull gliding past a ship, and up and down the long swell of waves, after a storm.

I soon gave up the race; for I perceived that I should lose sight of it directly, and that it could easily beat me something like a half in every mile I ran with it.

This is one of the remarkable creatures of our great plains; it seems to be solitary in its habits through the greater part of the year. I never saw more than one at a time, except in the rutting season; and it looks very odd to see one of them bound up suddenly near your feet, in the midst of these vast, bare wilds, and go

off across them with a speed that seems to annihilate space. They are easily shot, though.

The doctor killed one before night, vowing that he suspected it was made of India rubber and whalebone, from its springiness, and he wanted to put the thing to proof with his teeth; nor did he seem to have altered his first opinion much after the experiment.

We camped at a mud-hole; for it is ridiculous to call the stuff it held water. We had, fortunately, some left of the morning supply in the water-gourds. The poor horses seemed to think it a hard dose to swallow.

January 23.—We started very early. Hicks says we may look out for Indians. He showed me a trail, which I should have taken for that of a drove of mustangs, but which, he said, was of a party of Indians. I was curious to know how he could tell; for Indians ride mustangs, and they are not shod.

He said that mustangs seldom go out of a walk when traveling, and follow the stud, or leader, nearly in single file; but Indians move more irregularly, and abreast, making a wider trail, and their horses' feet sinking deeper from the weight they carry. Another sign is, that the dung dropped by the horses is harder; another, if you follow the trail for a mile or so with a hunter's eyes, you will be sure to find some little scrap of meat, or some trifling thing they have dropped, which makes the matter sure.

He picked up a feather which seemed to have come from the end of an arrow, and, on the strength of it, forthwith pronounced them to have been Snake Indians. On examining the dung, he said they had passed yesterday morning.

This was all as mysterious as reading Sanscrit to the most of us; though I knew the old fellow's sagacity in such matters was unerring. I forthwith laid my commands upon the doctor to be a little less erratic; for our trip had been so uniformly fortunate and pleasant, as yet, that it was time, in the "course of human"—at least prairie—"events," that we should meet with something un-

pleasant. We saw thousands of buffalo, but no Indians. We reached tolerably good water and camped, but made no fire.

January 24.—We started before sunrise. Hicks says we must make a very long stage to-day. Here we are at last, camped on the south bank of the main branch of Red River, our fire flickering palely amid the black, misty shades of this tall, rank forest, while the hoarse ripple of the water answers to the owls, and the wild cat mews a faint chorus to the yells of panthers. Fine music to sleep by! I am tired, and can not write.

January 25.—We waked a little astonished to find our toes had not been nibbled by some of these white-fanged gentry, who seem to be so numerous in this neighborhood.

We forded the river where a buffalo path led across it; always a safe guide, these paths; for the traditional lore of these animals, in all matters appertaining to "crossings," is singularly infallible.

The river is about a hundred yards wide, bold and rapid, but dark and muddy as "eating-house" coffee. We were soon out of the "bottom," and on the prairies again; countless thousands of buffalo off to the left; but the novelty has worn off, and we are all tired, save the doctor, of shooting them. It was with some difficulty I could keep him from dashing into the nearest herd; he insisted that he must try the experiment of the cloak fully; he thought a buffalo would make a funny game of "Blind Man's Buff."

The Scotchman thought it would be degrading the old country sport of "Blind Man's Buff" into "buff-a-low" game. Not so poor, that; wit, though it be bad enough for the frontier even, sounds right odd, coming from Sandy's frosty lips!

The doctor was a little cured of his "splurging" notions, when, toward evening, we saw one of these herds tearing across the prairie, a great distance off, as if the old Harry himself had been goading them with his red-hot pitchfork. Old Hicks said there were some of his grandchildren at the tail of the business, if the

old gentleman was not there. Indeed, we could faintly distinguish four or five naked rascals galloping in their rear ; but they seemed to be so occupied in poking away at them with their long lances that they did not observe us, and passed out of sight. It is evident enough we shall make some acquaintances soon.

We camped in a line of timber, with about water enough for our horses to wet their noses in ; but we built no fire.

January 26.—Hicks thought there was water eight or ten miles ahead. We started at daybreak, without breakfast, and in two hours came to a small, but bold stream. We stopped to refresh our horses and ourselves. We got under way about eight o'clock, and reached the Washita about dusk.

Rolling prairie ; saw no more of the Indians, but, forward, many antelopes. Shooting was prohibited, and we have meat enough.

The doctor's air-gun will be a great affair should we get hungry in Indian range. The Washita is a deep and rapid stream. We camped in the timber.

January 27.—Eventful day.

We had crossed the Washita, and were nearly through the "bottom timber," when, hearing two guns quickly succeeding in the rear, we wheeled and galloped back.

It seemed that the doctor, as usual, had lingered behind, when a large bear came out of the thicket between him and us, and, without noticing him, turned his back upon him and went to smelling our track. He, not fancying such cavalier treatment, determined to give the brute a notification that would last him, not to treat gentlemen in such style. So he drove away at him with his air-gun.

The shot was sufficient to make the animal furious, and, with a savage growl, which attracted the attention of the men behind us, it made at the doctor. His horse had never seen a bear before, and dashed off among the trees with such sudden and unexpected violence that the unfortunate genius was knocked off.

The monster rushed at him.

He was lying on his back, kicking and yelling like a clever fellow, when Gallagher and Thompson came up at speed, and gave his assailant a platoon in the rear, which, fortunately, diverted its wrath to them, and they soon finished it with their pistols.

The doctor was very fortunate in getting off with his thigh badly scratched, and his buckskins laid open to the knee, by a wipe of the creature's paw.

In the spirit of making the best of a bad bargain, we cut some choice steaks from the carcass. But we had scarcely finished our laugh at the doctor, and were carelessly riding across a slip of prairie, toward a point of timber, when a party of full twenty Indians burst from behind it, and, ringing the war-whoop, came charging full at us.

Sudden as the thing was, the men showed great coolness and promptness; and when the cowardly scamps had approached within about a hundred yards, almost close enough to see into the row of dark tubes leveled at their naked carcasses, they, with a rapidity of movement perfectly bewildering, held up their white shields, lowered their bodies on the opposite side of their horses, and galloped out of reach.

We did not fire; for it was useless to exasperate them, if it could be avoided.

They stopped a few hundred yards off for a moment, then galloped clear around us at a respectful distance, making wry faces and slapping their clouted seats of honor at us, and then made off.

This last delicate maneuver is the bitterest insult known to their code, and is a proclamation of war to the knife.

Hicks thinks they have gone off for a re-enforcement hunting somewhere in reach, and that they intend to attack us some time to-morrow.

Well! "forewarned forearmed." We camp in a small mott

to-night, near a puddle of a "water-hole." Sentinels were carefully stationed.

January 28.—The Camanches attempted a daybreak surprise, for the purpose of "stampeding" our horses, but found themselves mistaken. We expected this very trick; and on the last watch the sentinels, as ordered, waked us up.

We had previously staked out our horses round the camp at such a distance as to invite the attempt; for we knew they would be watching us, and knew, too, that they never make attacks until just before day, because they are aware that men and animals both sleep most profoundly at that time.

We all crept out cautiously, and lay down, each man by the feet of his horse, just as day was beginning to break. The first we saw or heard of them they were within gun-shot, coming at full speed through the low, dense mist. Every man sprung to his feet; and just as they set up the whooping and hurrah intended to frighten our horses, and make them break loose on a "stampede," we let drive with our rifles among them.

I never heard yells cut so short before. I heard several fall heavily from their saddles, and there was great confusion among them, but the party seemed to be too numerous for us to charge out among them; what they were at, there was not light enough to see distinctly. Our guns were not idle, and a few arrows came pattering among us; but in a minute or two we heard the tramp of their retreat die away on the quiet morning air.

Not hair nor hide of them was to be seen. They had carried off their dead and wounded, if they had any; and I think they've had enough of us to last them.

January 29.—We saw nothing more of Indians to-day. I think they will be content to give us the go-by after yesterday's work. The immense advantage that our weapons give us leaves little room for surprise that we should be able to contend with them at such odds. A party of Camanches which have guns is seldom to be met with.

When any guns are among these tribes, they are generally miserable cast-iron barreled affairs, and these are not as efficient in their hands as bows ; for, with rifles, they are wretched marksmen. The bow and lance are their national weapons, and they use them at close quarters with astonishing dexterity.

But our rifles tell well at a distance entirely out of range of their arrows ; and it is a usage they seldom deviate from, in their predatory warfare, never to run the certain risk of losing a warrior. This rule only holds good when plunder is their object ; for, when roused by revenge, or fairly cornered, they fight with a fierce desperation, which goes far toward equalizing weapons.

I know they are hanging about our course, with the determination not to lose sight of us until they can retaliate by a decisive blow the loss they must have experienced in their late fight. The cautious knaves are more dextrous and patient than wolves in following up an enemy unseen, and biding their time to strike successfully. But we shall be on the look-out. Our sentinels are regularly posted. Should they succeed in stampeding our horses, we would stand a poor chance out here.

CHAPTER VII.

THE JOURNAL.

WE have passed to-day over a lovely country, resembling, on a magnificent scale, the park scenery of England.

The beauty of some portions of these wide solitudes is surpassing, beyond all power of the most vivid imagination to conceive.

In one spot the landscape spreads before you, not a tree in sight; all one swelling, undulating field of prairie. A little further, and the trees, which follow the course of the streams, seem, in the far distance, like the hedges dividing the estates of some great nobleman.

On you ride, and before you looms up, rising from the valley and mounting the hills, huge herds of those shaggy cattle of the wilds, the buffalo, pursuing their path without being urged on by the herdsman.

Scarcely has your sight rested on these before, when, to your right, pass you, in all their graceful beauty, a herd of the more lightly-formed and poetical antelopes.

Scarcely have these glanced before your vision, when the trampling and snorting on your left announce a drove of mustangs, the barbs of the western hemisphere.

These Joseph-coated gentry, glorying in their motley coats, their liberty, and their speed, gaze at you from afar off, and, if you approach toward them, scurry away with a thundering speed that makes the earth tremble beneath their unshod hoofs.

These are some of the sights and scenes of the prairie.

Is it a wonder that the ranger, who once feels the enchantment of these great plains, breathes their pure air, and feasts his eyes upon their glories ; who finds the wants of his senses bountifully supplied around him, with just enough of the excitement of danger to give an adventurous spirit pleasure ; is it a wonder that he should turn aside from the confined and crowded haunts of man, to revel in the embraces of Nature, when she thus woos him with her magnificent voluptuousness ?

It is matter of surprise alone to me, that one who has enjoyed the freedom of these vast solitudes, who has experienced the glowing excitement of the hunt and the Indian skirmish, can ever rest satisfied among the dull scenes of civilization, where each successive day, in its unvarying round of employment, is but a prosy mimic of the day before, and the blood oozes slowly through the veins till it almost stagnates.

Let those born to plod and fulfill a destiny of dullness dole out their life in habitations they have raised around them, and die, and be gathered to their fathers ; but let the bold, the impulsive, and adventurous, those whose souls can be moved to joy in the contemplation of Nature in her wild and wonderful moods, let such seek the solitudes of the vast prairie, and, galloping over the boundless plains, or lolling at the camp-fire, beneath the giant trees that guard the river side, drink in, with undisturbed hearts, the beauty and sublimity of her fresh presence !

To make the sudden step from the sublime, there is Doctor Martin mending his breeches, and cursing 'bears and bears' claws in general. The men are laughing and joking about the adventures of the last two days.

It is strange how reckless the habit of facing dangers make us. These men are as merry to-night as wedding guests ; yet they know that the eye of a Camanehe spy gleams to the light of our fire somewhere among the trees, and that we may be attacked before sunrise. This wild life is enchanting, and madly exciting.

We have tolerable water, and a strong position for our camp.

January 30.—We have traveled almost due west to-day.

Hicks says that he wishes to strike the head waters of the Canadian. We have passed through the most enchanting scenery.

Now a level prairie, like a broad lake dotted with its thousand isles, the open vistas between them populous with buffalo, deer, and here and there a cluster of wild horses. The last, half hid among the winding lanes, would raise their heads and take a long look; then snort, arch their slim necks, curvet and prance, half circling around us, to see what the curious apparitions intruding upon their quiet domain might mean; then, distrustful and frightened, dash away, to be lost from view in a moment.

Then a dozen antelopes would dart across an opening like a flock of swallows.

Sometimes a small creek would lay across our course, with its deep, shaded fringe of forest.

In passing one of these, we saw a huge bear out in the prairie. He stood up on his hind legs as we came in view, and snuffed toward us most sagaciously; but his wisdom seemed to be nonplused; for, not being able to come to any distinct understanding with his nose as to what this odd-scented group might mean, he formed the conclusion it would be safest to make any further investigations from the timber. So down he dropped upon his four legs, and traveled toward the bush with an expedition not a little increased, when the doctor, who was still splenetic on the subject of bears, borrowed my pistols and took after him.

The doctor gave the bear two shots before he reached cover; and, I suppose, Bruin will remember the smell of gunpowder for some time to come.

We camped on a narrow, rapid stream. Wickliffe shot a cub near the camp, and we have had a glorious roast. The doctor vents his spleen upon the fat steaks, which Teddy dispenses with profuse generosity round the fire.

The Indians have found us out now, and it is hardly worth while to stint ourselves in the matter of fire ; for they are certain to follow us, any how, and know where we camp.

The sentinel's duty is rather severe, after a hard day's ride. Better stand that, though, than lose our horses.

January 31.—While breakfast was being prepared this morning, the doctor and myself took our guns and walked off a little way into the bottom to shoot game. The timber was very tall and large.

In the course of our walk, as the doctor, who was a short distance before me, passed beneath a large wild cherry, the limbs of which came near the ground, my attention was attracted by a rustle among them over my head. Looking up, I saw a large puma, or American lion, as it is called, crouched on the limbs, with its ears laid back close, and its tufted tail quivering to and fro among the twigs.

The vicious-looking wretch was in the very act of springing on his head.

I shouted quickly, and at the same instant fired. The creature sailed out into the air, with its claws extended, and, in a convulsive spring, aimed right at the doctor. My shout had warned him in time, and, without looking round, he had bounded forward, out of reach of the descending monster. It pitched to the earth on its head, with a horrible howl ; its eyes burst from the sockets.

My ball had struck it plumb between the eyes ; and, after floundering and tearing up the ground and bark from the trees near, in its tremendous spasms, it fell over dead.

“D—n it !” said the doctor, as he kicked the carcass, “all the brutes seem to have taken a fancy for clawing at my buckskins. I must go in disguise, or I shall be eaten up, hair and hide.”

And forthwith, as soon as we returned to camp, the odd, whimsical fellow unbuckled his Hamlet cloak, which I had persuaded him to quit wearing, and fasten behind his saddle ; he took it now,

and cut arm-holes through it with his hunting-knife ; then ripping off a portion of the scarlet velvet lining, he drew the cloak on over his buckskins, and tied the flaming velvet round his waist for a scarf ; and, in spite of all our laughter, still persists in wearing this fantastic costume.

With the black wolf's tail and 'gobbler's beard in his cap, he makes a rich figure now : he thinks it will take a very sagacious "varmint" to identify him ; so do I.

These pumas look a good deal like a lioness ; for they have no mane, only the scattering or rudimental hairs, and are considerably larger than the panther, which they resemble most in their habits, climbing trees in pursuit of prey, as it does also. Their color is tawny-red, with gray hairs mingled through it, and pure white underneath.

They are not usually dangerous ; and the hunters were surprised a good deal at our perilous adventure with this one, and seemed disposed to favor the doctor's theory that there was a general coalition among the brutes for his special destruction, because, as we supposed, the report had got out that there was "a chiel amang em takin' notes, and, faith, he'd prent 'em ;" and that it was this last proceeding they wished to put a stop to. Very much the same character of country passed over to-day. Camped on a creek again.

February 1.—After passing the bottom of the creek on which we camped this morning, we came upon an open expanse, bounded only by the sky, where it shut down like a vast inverted basin upon the dead, plain level. Out to our left a long, black, irregular line of buffalo was stretched, like a great ragged blur upon the fair breadth of space.

It was a wonderful sight, those countless legions of dark, moving things shearing the brown grass before them as they rolled slowly on !

For miles and miles the infinite multitude was thronging, until

their rounded backs grew up against the sky, and the strained gaze felt weary in tracing them. I had never seen any thing like this before. The pigeons, when they cloud the sun, can scarcely be more numerous.

We had been moving past them for several hours, and still were all gazing in mute astonishment at this marvelous array, when Old Hicks suddenly exclaimed, pointing over to the right, "The prairie's on fire! The cussed Injuns want to burn us up!"

I turned quickly enough. Just under the horizon there was first merely a light smoky haze, which I should not have noticed as at all ominous; but in a moment this began to take on the appearance of a distant bank of mist, and then quick, dim points of light would break through. I turned my head, and saw this threatening appearance rising, slowly and simultaneously, on the three sides of us which were nearest the timber, thus totally cutting us off from all hope of escape by flight. It rapidly changed its form, and came down upon us with fearful speed. Now the dense and blackish volumes rolled up from the plain in huge knotted wreaths, while every moment from the midst a pale-red tongue of flame would leap, spiring up, and then sink, smothered in the murky folds that, bellied by the wind, swept heralding before.

Stretching far away, in front and behind, under the sky's rim, this terrible crescent seemed to be fast closing its fiery horns around us. Now the hot air struck us with its stifling currents, though there were yet miles between us and the flames; and, passing over, I could see when it had reached the herd of buffalo.

The mighty mass was still for an instant, and along the whole line I could distinguish the lifted heads of the startled leaders snuffing the danger.

Then there was a sudden tumult and recoiling, and the heavy roar of their affright boomed upon our ears; and, like a dark, great river, troubled and tossed by a sudden eruption beneath its bed, and turned from out its channel, with a rumble that made the

earth shiver as in a spasm, it burst, rushing and tumbling, a shoreless torrent, over the plain, scattered wide and wildly toward the west.

But our own case demanded all our attention. The rascally Indians had waited until we were in the middle of this very extensive prairie, and then set fire to the windward of us along a line of several miles at the same time. The winter grass was tall and dry; the wind had been high before; but in a moment it rushed past us a perfect gale of hot air, bringing the flames along with awful rapidity.

The cowardly wretches had calculated well; as I glanced around, I could see little prospect of our escape. It was hopeless to think of outrunning it.

Herds of mustangs were sweeping past with streaming manes and heads turned back, snorting in affright; antelopes scudded by like sea-birds; and deer, tossing their antlers as they looked behind, bounded long and high over the grass: yet I knew few of them would escape, with all their frantic speed; and what hope had we?

We were all gathered in a cluster, looking round us in awe, silent and confused by the suddenness with which such terrible elements of fear had burst forth—I at a loss what step should be taken; when I heard the doctor say, in a sharp, nervous voice, "What the devil are you at there, old man? I'm sure we are like to be roasted soon enough, without your hastening the thing!"

I turned, and saw Old Hicks on his knees in the grass, blowing away eagerly at a spark he had struck with his flint and steel.

Ah, right! It instantly occurred to me that our only chance was "to burn against the fire," as it is called; that is, set fire to the grass around us, and burn off all in the neighborhood, so that, when the great flood met our lesser flood, there would be nothing left for it to feed on, and it must subside on either hand, and leave us.

The veteran's long experience had promptly suggested to him the only recourse under such circumstances, which might have occurred too late, if at all, to our comparative ignorance.

I quickly sprang down to my feet, calling the men to assist in kindling and spreading our fire; very soon a circle of flame began to widen off, and while yet it merely crept along the grass, we urged our trembling horses over it, and stood grouped on the hot and blackened ground, holding their bridles.

Our defensive fire spread rapidly; but the opposing torrent rolled on with appalling speed, the glowing billows leaping large lengths as they would burst for an instant through the advanced masses of dense smoke that were rushing, curled and writhing like huge phantom-snakes, over the bowed grass ahead, in swift chase, it seemed, of the poor animals; for every instant these shadowy monsters would devour one; then the flame behind would shoot up a quick, exulting spire!

On! on it came! far along, above us and below us!

The air became fiery hot, and hurled the eddy volumes of smoke upon us; and the hissing roar and glare raged fierce and high in terrible tumult close behind.

Our horses became almost unmanageable; we were suffocating; we threw our blankets over our heads, and struggled with the frantic animals, in the steadiness of despair!

It was an awful moment of darkened wrestling as the fiery hurricane swept over us, or, rather, past us; for, parting where the fire of our circle met it, it went charring, crackling, roaring by on either side, though close enough to almost reach our skins; and when we threw off the envelope of the blankets from our faces, the Red Sea had been passed, and we stood safe, but astounded, upon the blackened, smoking plain.

"Egad, captain!" shouted the doctor, "Old Hicks has been the Moses this time!"

So he had been—the trusty veteran; and we all felt grateful enough for his prompt and opportune sagacity.

After the line of the fire passed us, we could see nothing for the smoke, except now and then a burst of sparks and flame which would shoot up above it for a second, which, Hicks said, indicated that some poor animal had been caught ; and after a while, as we rode rapidly across the plain to get off the heated ground, we could see a "flare-up," as Hicks called it, occurring every instant, showing that the great herd of buffalo had been overtaken.

They were probably, very many of them, burned ; for every few hundred paces we would pass the charred and shriveled carcass of a mustang or deer, showing how fatal those glowing surges must have been in breaking over that countless multitude. I do not doubt that many thousands were burned to death.

How bitterly we cursed the infernal Camanches, the next time we get within gun-shot of them will show.

After dark, we came to a stream about forty paces in width, which, of course, had bounded the action of the fire in this direction. We crossed, and are once more on the soft, fresh sod. We all took a bathe, and washed down our scorched and exhausted horses.

The excitement of the day has been such that I find it difficult to get to sleep to-night. I am acting as sentinel myself through the first watch, while the men sleep as if it would require a cannon to wake them.

Tired scribbling by the flickering light of dried twigs.

I wonder if we are to have the pleasure of hearing from those bronzed scoundrels of the breech-clout again before morning ?

February 2.—Hicks doesn't know the name of this stream ; at least, is not certain. Thinks it may be a branch of the Canadian.

It is ten o'clock, and we are not off yet ; pretty well used up by yesterday's business.

We did start at last, and have passed a rather sterile and uninteresting region ; plenty of game, though. One of the men shot a deer this evening, with nearly all of the hair scorched off of it ! It

has been through the "fiery tribulation," as the doctor says ; think it ought to be "done brown," any how, by the time it has passed through Teddy's hands.

The doctor wants to know of Teddy if this isn't that famous country the Irishman tells of, where roasted pigs run about with a fork in their backs, squealing, "Come, eat me !"

"Faith ! darlin', I wish it was a juicy pig, with a paratie in its mouth, in place of these long-legged crathurs ; it would be a swate cunthry for Irishmin."

The air is still tainted by the smell of yesterday's fire ; indeed, the odor of burned meat and singed hair has been clearly distinguishable all day. That was a mighty barbacue yesterday ! Nations could have feasted at it.

This country seems pretty well watered. We have passed one stream to-day, and are now camped on another small one.

February 3.—Started early. The country a slight improvement upon yesterday. Saw an unusual number of antelopes ; two bears were seen. Wickliffe shot at one of them, but it escaped.

We have camped on the south fork of the Canadian at last ; but it is very high up, and the stream, though bold, is narrow. Timber very heavy here, and seems to be so on the other side.

We have a perfect caterwauling serenade to-night. There seems to be an unusual number of the feline tribe in this bottom.

The very Old Harry seemed to have been among the cats last night, stirring them up with a forty-foot pole—such a squalling as they kept up !

One of the sleek-skinned gentry was caught belated this morning. I saw it sneaking down the trunk of a tree, about twenty steps from where I was lying, when I awoke, just after daybreak. I let drive at the gentleman and tumbled him off ; and such a yelling, kicking, and sniffing as he made of it, before giving up the ghost, I have not heard lately. It was what the hunters call a catamount, and is, apparently, a cross between the ocelot and wild

cat, rather larger than either, with a longer tail than the wild cat, and faintly mottled, as the ocelot. We got under way by sunrise.

February 4.—Our jerked meat gave out to-day, and we stopped about noon at a little branch; and, leaving Teddy and two men to prepare the fires, we scattered for game.

Hicks and Alexander soon killed a buffalo, which was sent to camp; and the doctor, Hicks, and myself then took down the timber on the branch to find a bear.

We got separated, and I was riding out across a slip of prairie from the branch toward a mott. Had nearly reached it, when I saw a horse grazing on the edge of it, with a lariat round his neck. This astonished me not a little; but I rode on toward it.

I had nearly reached the animal, when a single Indian, who seemed to have been asleep under the trees near, sprang to his feet and ran toward it. I stopped, and leveled my gun.

The fellow raised both of his hands, and threw down his bow and lance. I lowered my gun and rode up to him. I saw at once that he was not a Camanche.

He came up to my side, leaving his weapons on the ground, and, grinning very good-naturedly, with signs gave me to understand that his tribe was camped four miles down the branch, and hunting buffalo; that they were friends, &c.

There was a marked difference between this Indian and the Camanches. There was nothing of the gaunt, dark, ferocious look of those wild plunderers.

His color was much lighter, and his figure rounded, and rather effeminate. His face was round and full, with a somewhat easy, stupid expression; costume—what there was of it—very little different, though the ornaments were those of a northern Indian.

I was unable to tell what tribe the fellow was of; so I fired my pistol, to bring Hicks.

In two minutes the old man was in sight, at full gallop, followed by the doctor. The Indian looked a good deal frightened at all

this; but when Hicks came up and spoke a few words to him in his own language, he brightened up wonderfully.

Hicks said he was a Riana Indian; that they were friendly enough, but troublesome, roguish vagabonds. However, we took him to camp with us, gave him something to eat, and, with some trifling presents, sent him off rejoicing; no doubt to bring his whole party back with him.

We kept a good look-out for our thieving neighbors during the night, and about sunrise a whole party of them came galloping into camp. They were eager to trade us jerked meat and skins. We bought for trifles as much meat as we needed, but had no use for the skins.

They were very troublesome with their confounded curiosity, sticking their noses every where, as well as fingers. As these last fixtures possessed singularly adhesive properties of their own, we were compelled to be incessantly watching them. The knaves would have stolen our teeth, if we had given them half a chance.

But we were most tickled by the awful reverence with which they regarded the doctor and his air-gun.

One of the lean, wolfish, wire-haired curs they brought along had gathered a string of our meat which was drying on the bushes, and started to make off with it, when the doctor sprang to his feet, and, pointing his air-gun at it, tumbled it over.

I never saw creatures look so astounded in my life.

They went and picked up the dog, examined the rent the bullet had made in its head, probed it with their fingers, to see if it was a real hole, and, after clamoring over it for some time, dropped it, and formed a circle at a respectful distance round the doctor, who lay majestically reclining on his buffalo-robe, with the mysterious weapon in his hands, enjoying the thing highly.

And there they stood for a full hour, staring in awed silence at the wonderful "medicine man," who could take life by merely pointing at any thing which had provoked his terrible ire!

I believe he could have sent the whole party off howling by a gesture ; and, indeed, if they hadn't made themselves scarce pretty soon, I intended suggesting to him to try his necromancy on them again.

But they seemed to be so perfectly overwhelmed by this indisputable evidence of the power of his magic, that, after satisfying their curiosity in staring at him, they appeared not at all disposed to incur the risk of provoking his wrath by lingering any longer in his neighborhood ; and, very demurely dropping a number of trifling things they had stolen, took themselves to their horses, and tore away over the prairie like mad.

We all broke into a roar of laughter as they disappeared ; and Hicks told us that the doctor's strange costume had not a little heightened the effects of his display with the air-gun.

They had noticed it, and asked him if it was not a "medicine man" before. This may be a useful idea to us yet.

We have meat enough now, and will go on this afternoon. Camped to-night at a dirty puddle ; but there is no suffering for water.

CHAPTER VIII.

JOURNAL CONTINUED.

FEBRUARY 5.—To-day we have passed through a fine prairie region, scarcely ever out of sight of lines of timber marking the course of streams.

They cut up the surface, and make it resemble a constant succession of meadows of every size, hedged by tall fencing into all conceivable shapes of oblong, hexagon, square, &c.

These grazing farms might have been laid out—these strong hedges planted—by the herdsmen before the flood; for it is said there were “giants in those days,” and every thing here is on a scale to correspond with the belief of such an origin.

These meadows, stretching large lengths of miles, are jealously bounded by dense forests, that there may be “no strife between the herdsmen;” and then the mighty herds of shaggy “cattle,” which still feed on them, follow their leaders as they were wont of old, though they no longer fear the mountain pine, uprooted for a staff by their towering keepers, and shaken over them in terror, nor obey the hoarse roar of their voices in urging command or to check.

Verily, some of these old bulls, with their thick-knotted fronts and grizzled muzzles, look as if they might have defied many a thwack of a sizable pine-tree, and drawn many a deafening blast of angry imprecation, by their obstinacy, from the deep lungs of their hirsute masters.

Earth’s primal glories here are all unmarred; and God’s own

presence is felt lingering yet, as if, in love with his own work, he stayed to touch it again—creating new charms in multiplied duration.

Every day we have been tracking the steps of Spring : now we have caught her at last, with all her fresh and beautiful garments on !

Such delicate odors as she has scattered on the winds !

The pale flowers just born look startled and timid ; the broad blaze of this new life is all too strong for them ; and, with a dew tear in their soft-tinted eyes, they bow, leaning to the young, vigorous grass, and glow their downcast charms on it ; for even the tempered winds are yet too rude for their warm, exquisite pulses, and their modest cheeks bend low beneath the amorous caressing, to hide their conscious flush.

Oh, charming, joyous, holy calm—how fit for angels to light here and rest !

Their fair limbs here unsoiled might press earth's virgin lap, and their pure sense be freshened by things so innocent—with such sweet airs about them mellowed so witchingly ; that, beguiled, they might forget these had not grown in heaven, and dream for a while they tarried on its plains.

Hey-dey ! I've grown rhapsodical on this old log—a Texas captain floundering in Helicon !

Well, Spring hangs a green, soft fringe upon the knotted twigs of the harsh post-oak—scatters mosses, tendrils, flowers, and vines, too delicate to have a name, over the rough, angular, weather-blackened mass of sandstone on the mountain side ; and I can not see why it is at all more anomalous that the same charmed power should awake poetical yearnings in the rugged breast of a frontiersman : as to the expression of them, that is another matter, in which Spring doesn't interfere, and for which, happily, she is not accountable.

Every one seems to have been so absorbed by the loveliness of

the panoramic changes occurring at every step to-day, that no game has been shot ; indeed, nobody thought about it.

We've had enough of hunting for the mere sport, and we are bountifully supplied with meat.

Camped early in a pleasant grove, with a clear brook rippling beneath it.

Every day the tastes and passions of the nomad, I feel, are growing stronger within me.

February 6.—Still a very pretty country. We have traveled hard and fast to-day, to reach the main branch of the Canadian, on which we are now camped. It is a bold, deep, limpid stream, and several hundred yards wide.

Alexander's horse, which was wounded by the antelopes, shows some symptoms of giving out to-day ; it had seemed to us to be getting along so well, that we did not think of buying another of the Rianas—wish we had.

It will be a vexatious business if the animal should give out, for we are making little progress, though we go from twenty-five to thirty and thirty-five miles a day. It would be rather hard for Alexander to keep up with us at this rate on foot, and equally so for us to be compelled to delay. But we can't help it.

February 7.—Made a long stage to-day ; not much encouraged about the horse ; Old Hicks has taken him in hand to-night ; he started off into the brush so soon as we stopped, as usual, without saying a word to any body, and came back about dark with a small bunch of an herb altogether new to me ; and even our scientific doctor was entirely stumped with regard to it.

The old man said it was Indian medicine, and that was all we could get out of him. He made a decoction of them in a coffee-cup and bathed the wound, which seems to be festering virulently, and the adjoining parts with it. Hope it may justify his faith.

Good camping ground.

February 8.—We have ridden over a seemingly interminable

prairie this blessed day, and here we are camped in what looks like the very beginning of the middle, without water, and nothing but grass and stars, and a bright, calm moon in view.

The horse seems to have improved ; at least, not lost ground. This is a roomy bed-chamber, and a big quilt with shining patch-work, that we have to-night. One finds out that water is a wonderful element under such circumstances.

February 9.—Confound this prairie ! We have barely managed to-day to reach the first line of timber we have seen in an age.

We were thirsty enough, horses and men ; and when we came in sight of this glad beacon, started off at a rattling pace to reach it.

I think I haven't seen faces so expressively blank lately as those of all our party, when we had galloped down into the ravine, and found only the dry, rocky bed of a stream.

The men cursed, and horses drooped their ears ; but it's a hard case that has no alleviation. After a painful scuffle down the broken, rough channel for about five miles, we came to a dark pool, which contained just about as much water as we could all drink ; better than a parched throat, any how.

February 10.—" Out of the frying pan into the fire ;" another long-winded, interminable plain to-day.

Poor Alexander has been compelled to walk the greater portion of the way ; his wretched animal seems to be giving up under this unfortunate concatenation of bad luck.

A dry, furry tongue to go to sleep with makes one feel rather savage. I can understand now why the cat tribe have such a reputation for ill temper ; their tongues are always dry and furry.

I am sure I could bite a tenpenny nail in two, or suck the blood of any decent " varmint," but they're as scarce as water ; have better sense than to keep in any such thirsty neighborhood.

Indeed, we have seen nothing but antelopes to-day, and they all seemed to be traveling with the speed of desperation for some far " land of fountains !"

Wish they would lend me their heels a while. The doctor says he means to "try it on," bear-fashion, and ascertain experimentally the true theory of "paw-sucking."

The merry scamp! old Harry would be in a cruel mood to persecute him seriously!

"The old oaken bucket that hangs in the well!"

This delicious, tantalizing ditty has been ringing in my ears all the evening. Well, this comes of wild, vague adventuring.

Hicks promises we shall have water before noon to-morrow; I shall try and sleep on that, for I have great faith in the old fellow's nose.

February 11.—Thank Heaven! we found vent for our chafed and thirsty spleen this morning in a hearty fight.

A party of about thirty Wacos came in sight soon after we started.

They approached us very cautiously, circling round and round us on their fine swift horses. We stopped, and Old Hicks rode out toward them, making friendly signs. They approached him confidently, and surrounded him.

We closed up within gunshot, and waited. He asked them for water; instead of answering him, they asked him for tobacco.

It happened he did not use it, and had none of it about him; so he shook his head and pointed back to us. They commenced pow-wow-ing around him, making a great clamor.

It seems they did not believe his assertion that he had no tobacco; he came out to make terms with them as the representative of our party, and, of course, ought to have had tobacco, if we had any.

They were about half right there.

They said they didn't wish us to come any nearer, and that they believed he wanted to cheat them, and denied that they had any water, though their gourds, brimming full, hung at their saddle-bows.

These were natural mistakes enough for Indians to make, and

there need not have been any difficulty. But we were very thirsty, and grew impatient at the long palaver they were making, and commenced moving toward them.

They started to fall back as soon as they noticed this movement; and Old Hicks, who, like the rest of us, was dry, and in no very prudent mood, made a grab at one of their water-gourds as they were wheeling off.

I saw the motion, and we spurred our horses on the instant. One of them lunged at the angry veteran with his lance, and received a pistol ball in return.

They rushed, yelling, at him; but at the moment we let drive a volley among them, and burst into the group at full speed, hurling them back on all sides, and for half a minute had it hand to hand before they fairly broke and scoured off.

They left four of their number on the ground, and several I noticed had to be assisted in keeping their saddles.

The old man received a painful wound from an arrow in the cheek; Thompson an ugly wound in the side from a lance; I had my arm cut; and the doctor got a slight scratch from an arrow.

But the best of the thing was, that the old man hung on to his water-gourd, which held half a gallon; and in addition, we got three of the horses of those killed; the other one followed the retreat; and a water-gourd was hung to each of these saddles brimful, and the horses were fine animals; so that we got as much water as we could drink, and three fresh horses.

So much for the Waco row! hope this may be the last of it.

We did reach some muddy, dirty holes after dark, from which the suffering horses managed to suck enough to keep them going.

But for the Waco gourds we should have been in a bad way.

The old man finds that we are further west than he had conjectured.

Thompson suffers greatly; his wound is deep, and the doctor thinks his case a bad one. The rest of us are too triflingly hurt, in comparison with him, to complain.

February 12.—We have had to carry poor Thompson on a buffalo robe, lashed to two of the Waco lances, which the doctor prudently brought along.

Two at a time, we have borne him between our horses all day, and it has been sad enough to hear his moans. We have been expecting another attack, but fortunately have escaped.

Just before night we reached a muddy water hole. It had not been stirred for some time, and there was about an inch of clear water above the sediment.

With a great deal of care we drew off enough to barely save us from suffering, before we let the horses at it. They sucked and sucked patiently for half an hour, and seemed to be satisfied with getting enough to wet their throats. Sad times these!

February 13.—Old Hicks has tried his wild herbs upon Thompson in vain.

We would have stopped to-day on his account, but the old man thought, if we could reach the timber again, he could find growing in its shade herbs of greater power; and, at any rate, it was out of the question to keep our horses suffering for water any longer, unless we desired to be all left afoot.

We traveled as tenderly as possible for the wounded man, and half an hour after dark we arrived at this place, greatly to our joy. It seems to be a branch of the Canadian.

Bold as the stream is, I thought, between us and our horses, that we should drink it dry.

The old man vanished forthwith to cull herbs; and, as those gathered under the moon are said to be most efficacious, from having imbibed a subtle energy from her charmed rays, I hope we shall see their magic illustrated in the partial relief, at any rate, of the unfortunate Thompson.

We could not move the wounded man to-day. There seems to be no improvement. The thrust has probably passed his ribs. The experience of the old man and the science of the doctor seem to be equally baffled.

A fierce inflammatory fever has set in. The doctor thinks the lance blade must have been dipped in poison ; for the course and character of the wound hardly justify the serious effects we are deploring.

It is ten o'clock A.M. The sufferer was released a short time since.

Mortification seems to have attacked the internal viscera ; for he looked perfectly natural until a little while after death, when the dark blotches made their appearance on the surface.

He died like a soldier and a brave man, as he was.

Strange that a death like this should so paralyze us all, when we have so frequently looked upon it after the fight, stretched, gore-clotted, ghastly, and cold, beneath our feet.

But this is a tried comrade, steadfast and true. He has not died amid the blinded tumult and excitement of the struggle, when our appreciation of the awful reality was blunted ; but he has passed from among us while we were cool and calm, and could realize how dreadful a thing it is to be snatched away from sentient things, and gay, familiar companionship ; to be hurried *sans* preparation on the journey to "that bourne from whence no traveler returns."

We had heard his last request, and pledged ourselves, if we should ever reach home again, to render up a strict account to the few who knew and loved him, of his latest words of them.

We buried him beneath a large live-oak ; and if it be any consolation to his friends, we can tell them that, as he died like a soldier, we buried him like one ; and the gray funeral moss droops mournfully over him from that old tree !

February 14.—We traveled sadly enough to-day ; for, with all the recklessness and callous hardihood our life for some time past naturally engenders, we can not help feeling that there is one strong heart from among our little band which lies pulseless under this almost foreign and unfamiliar earth ; and we can not but miss

a voice that we knew, when all is strange about us, and these solitudes so heavy.

Alexander unwillingly gave up his horse to-day.

He was very fond of the animal, for it was a noble one, and had been leading it in hope that it would get better; but we found there was no prospect of this, and persuaded him to turn it loose on the prairie.

It stood looking after us as long as we could see it on the plain, and, as it seemed to me, most reproachfully for our cruel desertion; but, silly fellow! he is greatly the gainer by it, and will, no doubt, in a short time be shaking his crest, and bounding riotously in his freedom, as any wild steed of them all!

The gallant Scot looks very woe-begone at parting with his old companion in arms, and I respect him heartily for it.

The man is far the greater brute of the two who doesn't love a faithful horse. The Waco horses, though, are splendid animals, and Alexander had the pick of the three. We have reached tolerable water.

February 15.—Made a very long stage to-day. Passed many herds of buffalo, but shot none. In the evening Gallagher shot a large deer, which evidently belongs to a new species.

The doctor says it has never been described. Hicks says it is most abundant along the foot of the Rocky Mountains, and that the hunters call it the "big-eared deer," and sometimes the "black throat," from a black mark along the dew-laps. It is much heavier and darker than the common deer; the ears rounder, and a third larger in proportion. It was very fat and delicious venison.

Reached a dry branch; found a good pool of water, after following its course a mile. The buffalo paths are of great assistance to us in finding water. They lead to this pool from every direction.

February 16.—We have reached another fork of this Briareus-armed Canadian. It is a very rapid stream, and apparently a deep one; for we were obliged to turn back in an effort we made

to cross this evening, and camp on this side. It is a good deal swollen, too. The ice veins of the mountains have been unlocked, and are running down upon the low lands with a vengeance. We shall not be troubled for want of water any more shortly, I conjecture.

We passed through a heavy-timbered bottom, nearly three miles wide, to reach this bank. Wickliffe shot an ocelot near the camp before dark. He had quite an adventure of it. One sprung up from a clump of bushes he was passing, and ran off. In a moment afterward he saw it ascending the trunk of a huge hackberry; he fired, and it dropped. The bushes between him and the foot of the tree prevented his seeing what became of it after it fell; and when he got there, it had disappeared. He was confident he had hit it mortally.

There was a large hollow in the root of the tree, sunk several feet below the surface; he concluded it must have crawled to this and dropped in; and on looking down, saw it stretched at the bottom. He wished to get it, and thought he could reach it by shoving in his head and shoulders, which he did. His hand was nearly on it, when suddenly a fierce growl sounded in the hollow, and in another instant a pair of fierce eyes were glaring close to his in the darkness. He scuffled in a hurry to get his head out; and just as he got it free, the red eyes, followed by a heavy bulk of fir, plumped him full in the face, knocked all sorts of stars out of his own eyes, and stretched him on his back. When he gathered himself up, he saw a full-grown ocelot bounding off through the brush.

It was a young one he had killed, and this was the old mother with whom he had been taking this unceremonious *blunder*-buss. The hollow was her den, and she had been concealed under the side when he looked in, and sprang out into his face. He was very fortunate in getting off on such easy terms; for, though usually timid, when cornered they are very savage; but, I suppose, the panic of surprise was about equal between the two. These

ocelots are the most beautiful creatures I know of, marked with surpassing elegance by intensely black spots upon a rich orange ground. They are slim and small, but most gracefully formed.

February 17.—We skirted nearly half of the day up the left bank of the Canadian before we found it fordable. A fresh buffalo trail led us across safe at last. It does not matter, though ; for its course is very much the same as that we wish to go. We are making west of north as directly as possible, for we must strike the head waters of the North Canadian ; but it is a long, weary way yet. I think we shall pay dearly enough for our curiosity before we are done with this adventure.

It must be northwest to Santa Fé. We have continued to skirt the Canadian up the right bank, and came on it to-night.

February 18.—Old Hicks announced this morning that we are not far from the Great Wild Horse Desert, and that we shall have to follow this stream to near its source ; for it penetrates this desert very much in the direction we wish to cross, and offers our only resource for water, of which that region is almost destitute. We will then have to strike across it to the north fork of the Canadian, and take our chance for finding water.

A noble elk burst from the timber a few paces from our party. The under-brush was very dense, and we were all riding along in a body very quietly, so that it did not suspect our neighborhood ; besides, it had been startled by the wolves, as we saw afterward. We were in the prairie, just on the edge of the woods, as it rushed out with a tremendous bound, and stopped within fifteen paces of us.

What a splendid brute it was ! It turned, as much astonished as we, and elevated its nose to snuff at us, until the tip of its huge antlers touched the middle of its back ; it paused for a second ; but as our guns flashed it leaped full thirty feet, and, with the speed of thought, was off. I thought for a moment we shouldn't get it, though four of us had fired ; but in a hundred yards it be-

gan to reel, and soon pitched over on its head. It was a very large and most majestic animal, and the first that we had seen, though Old Hicks had been expecting them for some time past.

We were standing round it, nearly all of us dismounted, when, happening to look back, I saw a pack of wolves, with their noses to the ground, break from the woods just where the elk did. They were so intent as not to have observed us; and the doctor, who is an inveterate hater of wolves, rode quietly toward them. They did not observe him until it was too late, and he keeled one of them over with his air-gun. The sneaks! it always does me good to see one of them killed. Camped on the river.

February 19.—So this is the famous Wild Horse Desert! Hicks says we have been on it since ten o'clock. Well, we have passed over much more dreary deserts than this appears to be. Pray Heaven it may be no worse!

February 20.—"We live and learn," is the old saying. I think we begin to-day to realize what a desert means. We have followed the general course of the stream, but its bed is extremely serpentine, and does make some curious bends. We struck off from one of them this morning into a wide plain covered with short, coarse grass. Hour after hour we jogged along, and still nothing was to be seen but the faint blue line of the river timber on our left, and even that frequently faded entirely; and on the right, the dead, monotonous level joining the sky.

We saw now and then a herd of buffalo or mustangs, but they were always between us and the river. In the afternoon the timber became visible again directly before us, and we gradually neared it until, about dark, we rode beneath its shadow, and found ourselves on the Canadian again. Here we camped.

February 21.—Very much the same scenery again to-day, though we skirted closer to the timber. Another elk shot soon after we camped.

February 22.—Still timber on the left, and prairie on the right.

Sick and tired to death of this unvarying scenery. A little thirst or starvation would be a pleasant variety.

February 23.—We have made one discovery at least, viz. : that rattlesnakes love sand and solitude. We have seen a dozen at least to-day. We generally find them basking in the sun a little distance from the timber ; and almost invariably, as we have passed a bend, we have seen some of them stretched, with their banded, venomous lengths, across our way. I expect to dream of them all night.

February 24.—We took leave of that branch of the everlasting Canadian to-day, and struck off across the vast level. But here we had an adventure, which, if there were no other disagreeable reasons, will insure our not forgetting it soon.

An acquaintance was made after the following fashion :

There are two abrupt descents between the level of the plain and the water ; one of them, just on the edge of the timber, about ten feet perpendicular, takes you down to the level of the “ bottom ;” over this you pass through a tall dense forest, about two hundred yards to the second descent, which leads with equal abruptness to the water.

We were camped on the edge of the timber, partly in the brush. Our fire was a few paces from the first descent, and we were seated round it, watching with sharpened appetites the progress of a roast of buffalo haunch, which, under Teddy's superintendence, was to furnish us a juicy breakfast. The doctor and Wickliffe were seated on a log, opposite to me, and just on the edge of the steppe leading to the bottom. I was talking with them, and, of course, looking at them, when suddenly, between their shoulders and behind them, I saw a shiny black nose, a pair of shining eyes, and short ears uplifted. The nose seemed to be snuffing vehemently. The doctor looked round, and bounded forward, over fire and all, so violently as to knock me back on the ground as I was rising.

It was time for him to jump, with that hot breath in his face.

At the same instant Wickliffe disappeared from the bank, and the head with him. The monster had wiped him off with one sweep of its paw, and as I sprang forward I saw them rolling together down to the bottom. With a shout I leaped after them, followed by the doctor. I remember pitching against a soft bulk, and then spangles and stars flew from my eyes, and I was insensible. In a word, I undoubtedly had been "knocked into the middle of next week."

When I became conscious again, it was of dizziness and languor ; when I could open my eyes, I first saw the tree-tops above me, and then recognized the whole party standing around me. Just outside the circle, the huge carcass of a grizzly bear was lying.

It turned out that the creature, being hungry, had been attracted by the savor of Teddy's roast to climb the bank, and, not understanding the rumpus the doctor and myself made, had raked at poor unconscious Wickliffe as the nearest prey, and rolled with him down the hill, and I, in my hurry, had fallen full against it, to receive a broad slap, which sent me, limber enough, at least ten paces. The doctor, who followed, was more lucky, and, keeping his feet, let drive into its carcass in time to divert its attention from helpless Wickliffe ; and Teddy rushed down with a chunk of fire, which turned it from the doctor. By this time the whole party had descended, who succeeded in dispatching it, after a furious struggle, in which Teddy's chunk was all-potent in preserving the men from its formidable charges, until a sufficient number of shots had been given to quiet it.

Wickliffe was taken up, along with myself, perfectly helpless ; but soon we found that we were worse scared than hurt, and Teddy's steaks shortly set all to rights. We have camped on the open plain to-night without water. A pleasant beginning this.

February 25.—Our water-gourds are not empty yet, and we just take a drop at a time to wet our swallows. The horses, I suppose, make out with the dew they find on the grass in the

morning. The herds of mustangs we have seen to-day would be in a bad way but for the abundance of this dew. No game to be had.

February 26.—Well! we have eaten the last of the grizzly bear to-night. We have drained our water-gourds dry, and when we shall get any thing else to eat and drink is more than I can venture to conjecture. If there were any "horned frogs," lizards, or other creeping things to be found enlivening this horrid waste, it would be some consolation.

February 27.—I feel very much like eating my saddle skirts to-night. Indeed, I should not hesitate to make a French soup of them, if we only had fire and water to do it with. But water is a romance; and fire wouldn't last long, made of green grass. The horses look wretched, and I am sure we feel so.

February 28.—About ten o'clock to-day Old Hicks shot a mustang. I believe we should have all gone stark mad with hunger and thirst but for this. We got water from its intestines sufficient to soothe the fire raging in our veins. Killing it was a noble exploit of the old hunter.

We stopped about two hours after coming in sight of the herd, before we saw the smoke of his gun and their scattering. He had crawled fully a mile on his hands and knees before he got in range of them. Just before dark we came in sight of a line of timber, and, after riding two hours in the night, we have reached it, and found a small branch running northeast. This, no doubt, empties into the north fork of the Canadian; so that we are through the desert.

Tell me not of

"That nepenthe which the wife of Thorn
In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena!"

Compared with a cool draught of water, nectar even would be loathsome to us.

This desert is a curious affair. I do not see why it should be call-

ed the Wild Horse Desert specially, for there is not a living thing of *any* kind to be seen in the interior of it, except occasionally a solitary raven; and on the edges of it, in reach of the streams, where the mustangs are only found, the buffalo, deer, and antelopes are quite as numerous as they.

Its vast surface is almost destitute of water; the soil is so thin and sandy, that, even after heavy rains, no water would be found, for it would sink as fast as it fell if it came in floods. A thin growth of coarse grass covers it. But the most remarkable feature is an interminable succession of gullies, the sides of some of them fifty feet perpendicular. Beneath the deep bed of sand is a stratum of tough red clay and pebbles; when the water sinks to this, it can get no deeper, and must find an outlet.

These gullics afford one; and the wearing of the water, as it dribbles along their beds, has gradually cut them down to great depths, and into most singular shapes too.

The hard clay has been perforated in ten thousand different ways, and left standing, to assume every conceivable form to the eye of the fanciful observer: here "column, arch, and architrave," and every shape of grotesquery, may be traced with no great effort of conjuration. While deep beneath this intricate fret-work, the water, when there is any, may be heard gurgling and tinkling on its difficult "winding way."

These gullies are entirely impassable, except at occasional intervals, and they are always designated by the buffalo paths, which sometimes run parallel with them for many miles before crossing. This crossing is often a very ticklish business; your horse has some how, or some how so, by a complication of maneuvers between sliding, rolling, and tumbling, to get down, and then he looks like a big bug climbing a wall, as he goes up, while you feel it advisable to stand clear lest he should fall back and make a smash of you.

You never know when you are approaching one of them, until

you are right upon the brink, and looking no little astonished down its sudden ragged cleft. In the dark you would be sure to walk off into emptiness before you were aware, for they are cut sheer down from the general level, with nothing along the brink to warn you. It surprises one greatly, after riding for hours over the monotonous plain, to come so unexpectedly upon these gaping fissures, which look at first as if the earth's crust was split down to its very center, and you feel as though you had come to "the jumping off place."

We are camped to-night on the north fork of the Canadian, here a bold stream, nearly three hundred yards in width, rolling on most imposingly, a turbulent and swollen flood; for Hicks says the snows are melting on the mountains. The valleys through which its bed lies seem to be the very paradise of hunters; for in every direction game is in view this evening, and the green luxuriance of vegetation, spread so enticingly on every hand, is an assurance of its constant presence.

February 29.—We followed the river bottom to-day, skirting the timber. All I have seen of the abundance of game heretofore would furnish no criterion of the affluence of this valley. Thousands of deer have been passed to-day, and many herds of mustangs. Hicks says we shall have to keep up this valley for a week or so before we are fairly among the mountains we desire to reach. This promise of superfluous plenty is by no means ungrateful. Hope it may only hold out.

Here ends my regular journal, which, indeed, was never after continued in this form, the stirring incidents of the journey leaving me no time to resume it. The hasty notes I was enabled to make show little variety of incidents for a number of days, though great rapidity of movement. During this time, we continued to course up the valley of the north fork of the Canadian, and were seldom out of sight of the timber. The valley gradually narrows; and on the fifth day we first saw the blue cones of distant knobs

on either hand. Each day they became more distinct, and seemed to be closing their giant ranks upon us, until, at last, on the left bank, we rode beneath their shadows, and counted the peaks distinctly on the right. Every day the common deer had been killed; together with these, the ordinary game, we got five black throats, three elks, and a grizzly bear. Indeed, game of every kind was superlatively abundant, and the river was, of course, our unfailing spring.

END OF THE JOURNAL.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CAMP.

THIS pleasant time could not be expected to last always. Our horses were beginning to exhibit signs of weariness, which warned us that we had been overtaking them in the tremendous stages we had frequently made, and that it was now time we should recruit them thoroughly before attempting to penetrate further the unknown region ahead of us. Old Hicks advised that we should select a favorable camping ground, and give them a week or fortnight's rest.

We had traversed an immense extent of country in an unprecedentedly short time; but it must be remembered that we were unencumbered with baggage of any sort, except the small bag of dried beef, the blanket, arms, ammunition, and water-gourd which each man carried. We were, therefore, enabled to progress with nearly the same speed as the prairie warriors on their plundering expeditions use.

The jerked beef we carried as a resource, in the event our rifles should fail at any time to furnish the usual supply of fresh meat daily. Where every man was a skillful hunter, this failure could only occur when the usually abundant game had disappeared from our route.

This had, as yet, seldom happened; though only Texan Rangers would have dared to venture so far, trusting to such apparently uncertain means of provision. But our own experience, and that of every genuine frontiersman I have known, goes to prove, most

conclusively, that the true mode of traversing these wild regions is that we had adopted.

Most of the sufferings and trials which have come in the way of the larger parties of explorers who have attempted to penetrate these regions have been consequent upon the encumbrances of civilized luxuries, which they have imagined to be indispensable for their comfort, as well as safety even. With their wagons and tents, their mule trains and droves of cattle, they meet serious delays at every turn; the game is frightened from their route, and the season for traveling finally slips away before they are aware, and they are left to flounder through a thousand difficulties, for which they have, at last, made no provision.

We were cursed with no such causes for delay. Wherever the wild deer, the mustang, or buffalo could penetrate, there could we go also, and find the means of subsistence, too, quite as easily as they. We had, therefore, in this short time traversed, with small inconvenience to such men, a distance which would have required a party differently organized several months to have passed.

Now, with a short time for recruiting, our horses would be fresh as ever, and ready to go the same distance again; while their animals, although they made all the time much shorter stages, would have been worn to the bone, and most of them have to be replaced.

We had the incalculable advantage of always choosing our grazing ground and watering places; and animals will do four times the service, if they have only the certainty of good grass and water when night comes. Ours, it is true, had suffered a good deal; but, as compared with what must have been the case with the others over the same ground, it was trifling.

The Indians make journeys of a thousand miles through trackless deserts and wildernesses, trusting solely to their bows and lances for food from day to day, and grazing their horses at night. We rangers have learned their trade of them, and can do quite as

much as they. Their stoical disregard of what we call comforts is the secret of their tremendous endurance; and I think my rangers have been tolerably well trained in the same school of prairie asceticism. We are quite as much at home here as on the Trinity.

We selected for our camping ground and temporary home a spot which united in a singular degree those characteristics of scenic grandeur, beauty, and luxuriance which belong alone to the vast and majestic solitudes of the great southwest.

A small, but clear, deep stream came tumbling down through the deep gorges of the almost mountainous knolls which now on either side hemmed in the valley of the north fork of the Canadian. The valley was here about two miles in width; and when this turbulent tributary reached the level, it at once became calm, and with a swift but polished surface lapsed into the embraces of the larger stream.

Just in the angle of their confluence we pitched our camp. A tall and open grove sheltered us. The grass was most luxuriant above and below us in the valley. When it began to grow sparse near the camp, we found a good crossing of the small stream near where it issued from the hills, and would lead our animals across to a fresh pasture. But we preferred occupying the point originally selected, as we were effectually defended on two sides, at least, by the streams from surprise.

We found a convenient ford to the Canadian a short distance below; and as the weather was now pleasant enough, our hunting parties, who desired to reach the valley on the other side, usually waded, leaving their horses to graze in peace; though we, of course, had always a sufficient picket-guard detailed to keep watch over them.

We were now in the midst of the Camanche country, or, rather, of their summer range; and it was near time to be expecting them down; for this was a famous game region. Though the buffalo had

not yet arrived in great numbers, still straggling parties of them had been seen, and they soon bring the Camanches in their wake.

We had deer, turkeys, elk, and bear within convenient hunting range of the camp in great abundance, so that our supply of meat was sufficient ; and, in addition, we obtained fine fish, with a little trouble, from either stream.

In this cool and shaded nook, with a sufficient variety of food, and nothing to do but to find lazy enjoyment in whatever sport was offered, we idled away the time.

None but the men of protracted and exhausting action can appreciate the bliss of genuine loafedom. The occasion comes to them so seldom, that the simple opportunity of repose without suffering is ecstasy.

I spent the greater portion of my time, in company with Old Hicks, exploring the remarkable features of the surrounding country. During these excursions, amid the wild, romantic glens and broken, precipitous knobs which flanked our valley, the old man grew communicative, and revealed to me, from the boundless stores of his experience, a great many novel facts with regard to the Indians in whose country we now were.

As we shall greatly need this kind of intelligence before this narrative is through, to enable us to understand many of its incidents, I shall take advantage of this temporary pause in the incident and action of our adventures to throw together some facts with regard to these tribes.

It has been extremely difficult to obtain any thing like authentic information with regard to the Indian tribes inhabiting this region. The most that we have known of them has been derived from the reports of trappers and traders, and occasionally a prisoner who has escaped from captivity has brought us a few items of importance. They are so jealously guarded as not to be able to get possession of very extended information.

The late commissioners, Messrs. Butler and Lewis, will, no doubt,

furnish information of consequence, though their mission was by no means a satisfactory one.

We give such details as have yet come to light from them.

According to the best information the commissioners were able to obtain, these prairie or border Indians consist of twenty-two thousand souls, of which the Camanches are the master spirits, and constitute about thirteen thousand souls, subdivided into six different bands with distinct organizations, all speaking the same language, but rarely uniting or acting in concert. They make no corn, but live entirely upon the chase of the buffalo and the mustang, and by continuous predatory excursions upon the northern Mexican provinces.

The next, in numbers and importance, are the Kiaways, numbering about three thousand five hundred souls, of the same character and vocation. The next are the Essequetas and Muscatarees, numbering about four thousand souls. They are recently from the province of Mexico, and are a corn-planting, improving people. The Wichetawes, Toweyash, Wacoes, Keechies, Tiwockenies, five little tribes, and though distinct tribes, speaking different languages, from long association and intermarriages, are much the same people. They average about one hundred and forty souls each tribe; they plant corn, and have settled residences and villages, but are the most notorious horse-thieves in the prairie.

The Ionies, Annodarcoes, and Caddoes are in much the same condition. They number about one thousand souls, and plant corn, pumpkins, &c. They live upon the Brazos River, nearest to the white settlements. The Lipans and Tonkaways, numbering about eight hundred souls, have heretofore been allies of Texas, inhabiting the country about San Antonio, and depending upon game for subsistence. These, with a few renegade Kickapoos, numbering about three hundred souls; Cherokees about sixty; Delaware and Shawnees about fifty, constitute the different tribes of Indians that were in attendance and parties to the late treaty.

The above is the substance of the official report of the commissioners in this connection, and we fear it will be found not to cover the whole truth.

The term Camanche includes a great many tribes who are united in a sort of confederation, resembling that of the old Six Nations at the north, and I am confident, from all the sources of information at my command, that this confederation must have been very poorly represented in the council at which this treaty was made. There are many reasons combined which induce this opinion on my part, most of which will be more fully illustrated in the course of this narrative. In the first place, these Indians have no longer any confidence in the white man's pledges. Their faith was forever destroyed by the following instance of villainous treachery on the part of the Texans.

During Sam Houston's *first* administration, I think it was, the chiefs of these tribes were all invited to meet the Texan commissioners at San Antonio, and form a treaty. Very many of them came in good faith, with their wives and children.

While the council was sitting in the long room of the court of justice, facing the public square, and the squaws and children were amusing themselves in the utmost confidence on the outside, the Texans, taking advantage of some dispute, which had, no doubt, been purposely gotten up with the chiefs inside, and which these faithless villains pretended to believe was endangering the lives of the commissioners, drew up a company of soldiers before the building.

The fierce chieftains, seeing this, and very properly supposing that they had been entrapped with a view to their massacre, sprang instantly to their feet, weapons in hand, and rushed to the door; there they were met by the bayonets of their treacherous hosts, and, seeing that all was up, they rushed upon them, and gallantly sold their lives to a man. Several of the commissioners were very properly killed in the melee.

Not content with this infernal slaughter, the soldiers turned their rifles upon the defenseless women and children in the square.

Even the little boys, who were shooting at sixpences for the amusement of the crowd when the massacre commenced, and who, true to their warrior instincts, wheeled and shot their blunt arrows at the troop, were, in turn, shot down. Not one of the two or three hundred souls thus entrapped escaped being shot. Only two boys and a woman survived, and they got well, in spite of wounds enough to have killed half a dozen white men.

If this be not substantial reason enough for their distrust of the white man from this time forever, then we would hardly look for a better one, though "reasons were as plenty as blackberries."

The hideous policy in this case was openly avowed, that the most effectual way of insuring peace with these tribes was to kill off all their chiefs, together with *their families*, as this would deprive them of their legitimate leaders, and involve them in endless intestine feuds before the succession could be settled.

Did hell in its gloomiest councils ever originate a suggestion more diabolical?

We are not sure whether the president, with a trickster's cowardice, did not, as usual, make a faint disavowal of this as an act authorized by the government. Our recollection is, that he never did; but whether or not, the stain is upon his soul, though possibly it might be difficult to detect it, where all is already so dark.

In addition to the very sufficient reason given above why these southern tribes should distrust any offers at reconciliation on the part of the white man, and be shy of meeting our commissioners, or of furnishing them with any thing like accurate details with regard to their own numbers and resources, there are yet others which go to strengthen the same conclusions.

The tribes of the Camanche confederacy are scattered over an immense territory, each tribe occupying something like understood limits of its own, and governed by an independent hereditary chief-

tain. The unwritten law of their confederacy is that of necessity alone. They never unite in action except for the purpose of combining to drive back some great common enemy who is threatening their common territory. They have their own private feuds among themselves, which are never laid aside but at such times of general peril.

It is, therefore, not at all probable that the two or three hundred chieftains, who owe and recognize no defined allegiance to any central power, but govern their separate tribes despotically, each under its own legendary code, and who are, furthermore, scattered over such an extent of territory that even our daring traders and trappers have never penetrated to their fastnesses—one half of whom, indeed, know nothing of the white man and his power beyond the vaguest rumors, and they all lowering in the darkest colors of treachery and cruelty—could ever be induced by a unanimous movement to come together for the purpose of treating with our government.

It is not the policy of these tribes to be at peace with their neighbors ; for their trade is war, and the game of life with them is plunder. They are wary and cunning, too, in a remarkable degree, and have always carefully concealed the knowledge of their true numerical strength even from their white prisoners ; feeling themselves entirely secure of maintaining secrecy on this point from the difficult nature of the country they inhabit.

It will be perceived, in the course of this narrative, that I have seen some portions of this country myself, and large bodies of these warriors ; and, in addition, I have conversed with several other persons, who, like Old Hicks, have been prisoners among them, as well as with intelligent traders, who have had opportunities of knowing much of them through personal intercourse. And now, taking all things into full consideration, I am thoroughly convinced that, instead of being set down at twenty-two thousand souls, the Camanche confederacy can at any time bring into the field twenty-

five thousand warriors, which would give four or five times this number.

It will, of course, be perceived that it is no joke, this undertaking of ours, to penetrate the fastnesses of a country which, however extensive, is yet peopled in such formidable numbers by mounted warriors.

From the rapidity with which they move, it will be easy for them in a few days to concentrate hundreds, or even thousands, of fighting men to overwhelm our little handful; and we may fairly expect that this will be done so soon as they get hold of any hint or suspicion that our destination is for the mountain of their sacred metal.

The prospect is *almost* sufficient to make one quail, and look back over the distance we have placed between ourselves and rescue, before we push on yet further into the profound dangers ahead.

But the die is cast. Rangers can never turn back; at least before they have fairly tested whether there be really such a word as impossible necessary to their vocabulary. We have repudiated the word long since; now we must bide the consequences.

We had been in camp some ten days, when the monotony of our life was suddenly broken up in most serio-comic manner.

On this evening the hunting parties had all come in, and the picket-guard was slowly driving up our horses before them for the night. They were in full view, when we suddenly observed an extraordinary commotion among the loose animals, and in another moment they started in full gallop right for the camp.

We all sprang to our feet; and Old Hicks, shouting, "A stampede!" glided behind the trunk of a huge tree. We all, without knowing the reason why, involuntarily did the same thing, and were just in time to save ourselves being trampled under the hoofs of our frightened horses, who tore madly past us, and were only brought up by the steep banks of the two rivers; and such was the rush that two of the foremost went over headlong into the water.

The cause of this extraordinary flourish on the part of our horses revealed itself as soon as they had passed. First in their wake came the picket-guard of three men, at a speed which did their horses infinite credit. Bringing up the rear, at some distance, we distinguished the figure of Doctor Martin, in all its glory of streamers flying, a little in advance of a compact body of some forty or fifty naked Indians.

With every jump their horses made, they were screeching their hideous war-whoop in most ear-splitting dissonance. If all the grisly fiends of Acheron had been trooping in his rear, the doctor could not have exhibited more lively demonstrations of extreme terror than such as we could perceive even at the distance.

He was wriggling and twisting from side to side in his saddle ; looking back, now over this and then the other shoulder, at their lance-points, which were almost pushed into his face. His Hamlet cloak sailed out wildly, lifted by the wind above his head ; his arms and legs were flying about like the limbs of a distracted supple-jack.

Nothing could be more irresistibly ludicrous than the galvanized terror which possessed him. And, poor fellow ! with good reason enough ; for we expected to see him spitted on their long lances every instant ! With all his danger, and although he was a great favorite, I could scarcely for an instant repress an inclination to laugh.

Though, as we have remarked, the doctor had seemed incapable of fear heretofore, it was clear he was now sorely panic-stricken ; such a crowd of bronzed and yelling devils at his heels would have panic-struck almost any man.

But this was no laughing matter for any of us. He was driving after the horses right into camp, and would bring them in with him ; for the headlong gait of pursuers and pursued could not readily be checked. The horses of both were strained to the very utmost of desperate speed.

The picket-guard dashed by us, and sprang from their horses. With clatter and roar, on came the mad rout, the poor doctor still in the lead. It would not do to let these desperate devils get entangled on the point between the two rivers; for, when cornered, they fight like tigers.

The timber around us was quite close, though, some forty paces in advance, it opened and became scattering. I shouted to the men to follow me, and rushed to the open ground, that we might show ourselves and check them before they came too far.

At the moment when we came in full view the foremost Indian was leaning forward over his horse's head, and seemed to be pricking at the doctor's back with his lance.

There was a broad grin upon the rascal's face, and he appeared to be enjoying the doctor's agony; but his expression was quickly enough changed as he saw us, within a few paces, in front of him. He attempted to swerve his horse, but in an instant was pitched headlong from his saddle by a ball through the head. This one had been so intent upon the doctor's scalp as not to have perceived us before; the main body had done so a little sooner; and in an instant, as if by magic, the form of every warrior disappeared behind the body of his horse, on the opposite side from us, and, like a flock of swift birds on the wing, they wheeled past us, as if moved by a single impulse.

Our appearance was so sudden that they thought it an ambuscade, and were not disposed to take time to count us. Our fire did them some mischief. Though several of us were baffled in our aim by the quickness of the dodging maneuver, I saw three warriors tumble, and instantly gave orders to fall back upon the thick timber.

These hardy plunderers required but little time to recover from a surprise. Quicker than I can tell of it, the whole body had wheeled again, and were charging, with furious yells, upon our retrograde movement.

The doctor, white as a sheet, had dashed into our midst as if he had been projected from a bomb ; but, reining in his horse within a short distance past us, he sprang to the ground, and came raging back to join us, with swollen veins and a face of scarlet, yelling like a madman, "Give it to 'em, d—n 'em! give it to 'em!" At this moment the Indians were upon us.

They charged at full speed ; and so formidable did they appear, from their numbers and the fury with which they came on, exasperated as they were by the loss of several warriors, that our men had begun to cower.

We had not yet reached the trees, and I had perceived that the men were disposed to make a break to gain their shelter, when this opportune re-enforcement, in the person of the furious doctor and the picket-guard, came in to steady us.

A balk would have been fatal to us all, as the Indians would have ridden us down instantly on their perceiving the slightest indication of shrinking on our part.

The wrathful explosion of the doctor had an electrical effect, and the men were steady as the trees behind them when the Indians came up. We had not had time to reload our rifles, but gave them our pistols, which were large, and told at thirty paces with such effect that the disappointed plunderers, who counted upon finding us with unloaded arms, wheeled again, and, after giving us a shower of arrows from under the necks of their horses, galloped off faster than they came.

We were somewhat prepared this time for the maneuver of dodging behind their horses, as they invariably do when they see you about to fire. But some of us aimed too low, and killed several of their horses.

One of the warriors pitched forward over his horse's head, and though he was gathering himself up with inconceivable agility, to follow the retreat of his comrades, he was not quite quick enough ; for the irate doctor sprang like a wild cat upon his half-erect form,

and planted his knife to the hilt between his shoulders. The warrior sunk to the earth; and the doctor, snatching his lance, rushed on in pursuit of another who had been dismounted; but this fellow was too sharp for him; and, overtaking his retreating friends, vaulted into a seat behind one of them, whose horse was going off at full speed.

The activity of these prairie Indians is almost incredible. The third one escaped in the same way. I observed, as they passed two of the warriors who fell from our first fire, that one stooped on each side of them from their horses, seized their hands, and dragged them off between them.

We gave the doctor a hearty cheer for his exploit; and, continuing our retreat, reached the close timber before the Indians could rally for another charge. But they seemed to have had enough of us, and kept on this time out of range, leaving the bodies of two warriors behind them. Hicks said that this was a very unusual occurrence, and showed that they were badly whipped.

We took to a tree, each man, and waited to see if they were disposed to return. They halted in a confused huddle, and seemed to be consulting for a few moments, when they dashed off at great speed, passing to and fro in front of us, apparently to reconnoiter our position, though they wisely kept beyond reach of our bullets.

They were, it was evident, most fiercely exasperated by the loss they had sustained, but most particularly by that of the two bodies, which, according to their notions of honor, was more grievous than even the death of the warriors.

We felt sure that they would not venture to attack us, for they are never known to follow up Americans with rifles after they have taken a position in the timber; but Old Hicks thought, from their bearing, that they would make yet another attempt to recover the bodies, and we prepared to give them a warm reception if they did. The dead men lay within short range of our position, and we thought we would be sure to bring down at least one apiece by our fire.

As they were going past us a third time, the doctor, whose fury was now quite as ludicrous as his panic had been, rushed out alone, swearing that he meant to drag in the bodies, and give them no chance to recover them without a close fight.

The Indians saw his purpose, and, wheeling quick as lightning, endeavored to cut him off. I had ordered the mad fool back again in vain. He kept on, and, seizing one of the bodies by the leg, commenced his retreat. His purpose had been to get both ; but the Indians were too close upon him. He had already some four or five arrows sticking about his clothes ; and when on his return to us, still tugging manfully at his burden, which he dragged after him, he looked, in several senses, the best representation of Shakspeare's "fretful porcupine" I ever had the pleasure of seeing on two legs.

The Indians were perfectly wild with rage, and dashed in, without regarding our rifles, near enough to pepper him well on his retreat, and to recover the other body, which they carried off, together with the balls we sent them. The reeling of several in their saddles, and the instant clustering of the others about them, to sustain them in their seats, showed that our mementoes had been well bestowed.

I never in my life heard more unearthly fury expressed by human voices than that which they howled forth on this last charge. The doctor, quite regardless of his wounds, and swinging his cap in the air, shouted back his triumph quite as wildly.

In our apprehension for his safety, we had quite unconsciously advanced some distance from our covert to meet him. Old Hicks had remonstrated against this imprudence, but we obeyed a sympathetic impulse, and met the poor doctor just as he was falling from his exhaustion and his wounds. I caught him in my arms, but he still hung on to his dead Indian.

We hurriedly gathered about the reckless scamp, and while some were engaged in pulling out the arrows, others seized his limbs to carry him off.

The Indians perceived our confusion, and when I looked up they were almost upon us again, lashing their horses and howling like demons.

Matters looked sufficiently serious for us now. We were near enough to regain the timber by running, but then we would be compelled to desert the wounded doctor, which, of course, we could not do.

Before I had time to think twice of what we should do, I saw Old Hicks run forward to meet them, with a gun to his face. The chief of the party, who was distinguished by a circlet of eagle feathers, which looked like a crown on his head, with a train like the tail of a kite sailing out behind it, was a few paces in advance. I only saw Old Hicks stop, with his gun leveled; I heard no sound, but saw the chief leap convulsively from his saddle, and fall on his face to the earth.

I was as much astonished for the moment as the Camanches, who halted at witnessing this unaccountable disaster, gazing in utter dismay on the old man, who stood with his silent gun still leveled at them, and then, with a wild and moaning screech, they wheeled their horses suddenly and went off at frantic speed, shaking their lances in the air.

I drew a long breath, for I thought the game was up with us now for a surety. The old man walked slowly back to rejoin us, and said, smilingly, as he held out the doctor's piece, "That ar pop-gun is somethin', after all—it scared 'em; they thought it was conjuring!" "Ha! ha!" gasped the fainting doctor; "hurrah for old *Silence!*" and hurrah we all well might; for old Silence, as he had christened his air-gun, had undoubtedly saved our scalps.

Old Hicks said that they thought him a conjurer, or great medicine man, and were, of course, terribly frightened, because they believed he killed the chief by some fearful necromancy, and could destroy them all by merely willing it, or looking at them.

There is a curious truth in this statement. These Indians are

ludicrously superstitious, and if we can ever get the hang of their terrors in this respect, we can accomplish wonders by playing upon them.

Be this as it may, it was a fortunate chance that interposed just now, since but for it our whole party must have been ridden down and exterminated. As it was, we were enabled to get into shelter and back to camp. The last we saw of the Camanches, they were going at full speed with all the fantastic expression of terror which might be expected from their start.

As for the doctor, we got him into camp insensible, and were apprehensive that, with all the prickings he had got in his multifarious adventurings, he would be seriously laid up for some time to come.

Hicks told us that, in the confusion, when we met the doctor on his Quixotic retreat with the body of the Indian, he had managed to get hold of his gun, which fell from his exhausted grasp, and, remembering the scene with the Riana Indians, he had concluded to try the same spell upon these Camanches: his success we have witnessed.

CHAPTER X.

THE PEACEFUL VALLEY.

THE Indians were gone for the present. We left their slain for the wolves and buzzards.

More of us than the doctor had suffered in this series of collisions.

Several of our men had been sharply wounded by their arrows, but nobody complained; for, as compared with the doctor, no one felt himself a sufferer.

After Old Hicks had dressed his wounds, which proved to be more numerous than deep or dangerous, and he had taken the refreshment of a few hours' sleep, he was able to give us some account of the extraordinary panic, which we had seen to possess one of his undoubted courage in the opening scenes of this sudden adventure.

It appears that the doctor had started very early that morning, on an exploring excursion up the valley of the small stream emptying into the Canadian. For some distance after entering the gorge we have mentioned, it was very narrow, and he had found some difficulty in getting over the ground.

The gorge suddenly opened into a wide and beautiful valley or basin, surrounded by steep hills.

He describes this scene as the most paradisaical he had ever witnessed.

As the valley was protected on all sides by the hills, the vegetation here was greatly in advance of that elsewhere. The grass was long, and of a cool, fresh green, and the surface was studded

with small islands of timber of the most curious shapes ; while here and there a mighty live-oak stood apart, covering nearly a quarter of an acre with its long arms, from which depended in graceful festoons the gray, silvery moss of the country. Glistening in the sun's rays, this moss gave them the appearance of hillocks powdered with silver dust, while the festoons seemed alive as they swung gracefully in the gentle breeze.

Feeding among these islands he saw many flocks of antelopes, and now and then a herd of majestic elks browsed lazily in the shade.

The doctor spent the day in exploring this lovely valley. It was a sort of enchanted scene to him, and the deep, slumberous stillness over all, that seemed as if its echoes had never been waked since the birth of time, gradually, as evening came on, lulled him into a sleepy sympathy.

The antelopes appeared never to have been disturbed, and, as he rode among them, would only lift their heads and gaze at him in innocent confidence. He could have killed any number of them with pistols, and they only stepped aside from his path like sheep.

His curiosity as a naturalist had been long aroused to observe the habits of these creatures, and now that this extraordinary opportunity was afforded, instead of shooting at them, he stopped his horse among them, and sat watching them for some time.

Gradually the silence weighed upon his senses, and he fell asleep in his saddle : a very common habit, by-the-way, to those who ride much.

He does not know how long he had slept, but when he awoke it was with the unearthly screech of a Camanche war-hoop in his ears. His horse bounded off, and he came near losing his seat. He had only time to see them some hundred yards off, coming at full speed. They had just discovered him, and burst into a yell of triumph at the sight.

This fortunate warning gave him the start, and thus their eager-

ness cost them dearly enough. Of course, such a waking up from a sleep of profound security was enough to frighten a stronger man than the doctor.

He says he literally felt his hair rise as his horse went off. It started in the right direction, as luck would have it. He had the advantage of the Indians in knowing the ground, and when he had gathered in his scattered senses, he put his horse up to its work steadily, and the desperation of his fright seemed to be infused into the animal.

When he reached the entrance of the gorge, his knowledge of the narrow and difficult way enabled him to gain upon the Indians; but, so soon as he came through into our valley, they rapidly closed upon him, and the doctor swore that he could feel a lance against his backbone for the last quarter of a mile.

We suspect his imagination helped him to some part of this idea, though we have seen how close and desperate the chase was when he came in. They could have killed him easily enough by throwing a lance at him, and would have done so had they perceived us sooner. In the absorbing eagerness of the chase, they had not noticed our approach to the rescue until it was too late.

How they happened in the fair and virgin valley where the doctor, unfortunately, met them, it is difficult to conjecture. He says it is a question whether he or the antelopes were the more astonished. I think his escape through all these perilous adventures far more surprising than that the Camanches should have found the valley on the same day that he did.

He had eight arrow wounds on his body, and there was the prospect of our being detained some time in waiting on his recovery. Old Hicks took him and the other wounded men in hand; for though not exactly a *professor*—cheap as that title is in this country—yet his experience in surgery had been practically very great, and he had learned much from the Indians of the most obvious and simple remedies. I had rather trust him for a flesh wound than a whole college of surgeons.

We found the two horses that had fallen into the river quietly grazing on the other side of the Canadian.

We built temporary shelters of woven boughs for the wounded, and gathered around them all the conveniences of a hospital which were in our reach, and they, of course, were primitive enough.

We were discovered—our camping place was known to the Indians; and now it had become necessary for us to be incessantly vigilant, for undoubtedly their spies would observe every movement we might make, and be prepared to take advantage of the first imprudence to attack us again. We felt sure they meant to strike at us again for vengeance.

In the present crippled condition of our men, an attack would be a serious matter. We protected our position as well as possible by cutting down trees; but our greatest trouble promised to be the want of meat; for, with the hunter's characteristic improvidence, we had wasted our supplies each day, trusting always to our rifles for the next.

It would now be eminently dangerous to go out hunting alone, and our party was too small to bear division after the strong picket-guard necessary for the horses had been detailed. The grass was pretty well destroyed near us by this time, and I began to foresee some trouble in this quarter. We had, however, a resource in the two rivers for fish, which did not now fail us.

The doctor's description of his Sleepy Valley among the hills had taken great hold upon me, and, after some further consultation with Old Hicks, I determined I would move our camp to it, and take up some strong position there, which we could hold against any number of Indians. Nothing more had been seen of the Indians, and on the second day after the fight we prepared to move. We made a litter of boughs for the doctor, and he was carried in advance, to show the way; the other wounded men were able to ride, with some assistance.

The involuntary exclamations of surprise and delight which

burst from the lips of every one, when we came out of the defile unexpectedly upon the opening of the doctor's valley, showed that in his descriptions he had not exaggerated its beauty.

It seemed not to have been revisited by the Indians ; for every thing was quiet as he had found it. Even our horses lifted their heads with pricked ears, and gave a joyous neigh as they looked down the cool luxuriance of the vistas which stretched away before us.

It seemed to be an oval-shaped basin, and the wall of hills stretched away on either side with the sweep of a gentle curve, while their sentinel crests broke the sky-line with many an abrupt and tower-like cliff. This castellated effect was so striking, that I almost expected to see the steady tramping of the helmeted relief-guard defined against the clear sky as they went their rounds. Instead of any such romantic illusion, I did see two mounted Indian spies withdrawing slowly out of view over the comb of the ridge on the left, as if they did not care much whether we saw them or not.

Some of the men were eager for a chase ; but I, of course, with-strained them, knowing, from the deliberation with which the spies moved, that a pursuit was just what they desired. We had known all the time that they had been hovering about us ; but they had always before kept out of view.

Old Hicks lifted his thumb to his nose, and very coolly twirled his fingers at them as they disappeared, as much as to say, " We are not quite green enough to follow into that ambuscade, my fine fellows !"

I do not know whether they understood the peculiar significance of the gesture, or saw it even ; but our party greeted it with a burst of laughter, which was loud enough to reach their ears, at least.

There was something excessively ludicrous in the idea of this elfish gesture being made in such a scene, and while we were sur-

rounded by such peril, by that grave, stern, and hard-faced old man ; such a touch of humor from that somber source seemed to express a degree of cool confidence and reliance upon our own resources which was perfectly exhilarating ; for we looked to the old fellow as our oracle in extremities.

In quite a glee, we proceeded to select our camping ground. On looking round, we perceived that the spot on which we had halted was just the place for us. The mouth of the gorge was very narrow, and, of course, easily defended.

A precipitous bluff, under the shadow of which we stood, formed a secure defense on our flank, while there was just space enough of open ground between it and the river bank for us to occupy with convenience ; our camp would then be exactly across this entrance to the valley.

We set to work and made a slight picketing across this opening, to render every thing secure from the rear ; though we felt confident the Indians would never attempt to attack us through this defile. A buffalo trail descended to the water in the front of us, though there was no crossing on the other side of the river, the bank of which was steep and unbroken opposite.

This was a watering-place for the herds of the valley, and, from the freshness of the signs and depth of the trace, we saw it must be constantly frequented by elks, antelopes, and deer ; and, indeed, we had scarcely taken up our position, when parties of these animals were seen approaching to water. We had simply to keep still, and let them alone a little while, when a fine flock of antelopes came up, and, after curiously regarding us at a short distance for a moment or two, several of them left the trail and walked right among us, snuffing curiously and timidly at our saddles, which lay upon the grass.

This was to all of us so extraordinary a sight that nobody thought of shooting at them. How was it possible they could be thus ignorant of the destructive attributes of our race ? We had fallen upon a new Eden of unsophisticated life !

These graceful creatures had been shut out, by their steep hills in this enchanting recess, from any knowledge of the gloomy and bloody strife which man has been waging with himself and all God's creatures since sin and death came into the world.

There was not a person among us who was hard-hearted enough to be, willingly, the first messenger of terror to announce to these innocent creatures that the curse was upon the world, smiting with a red right hand its sunny heart.

Ah ! how I yearned to be the good shepherd of such flocks, and, leading them beside the cool water-brooks through their green meadows, live within the blessed atmosphere of this so holy calm, as the old Adam and his patriarchal children did.

I felt the better instincts of my nature uplift themselves in a revolt against the harsh and fierce conditions of that endless struggle with all being and all peace, in which my life had been so long involved. Was this stern antagonism natural ? Did it include the higher purpose of our lives—touch our nobler capacities of bliss ? I felt weary at these thoughts, and as if I could sink forever upon the placid bosom of our mother earth and sleep a sweet sleep of dreamlessness ; for that would, at least, be peace. Even the rough hunter has such times when the angel in him moans, and chideth plaintively of its rude estate !

But, hoity-toity ! a captain of Texan Rangers become first poetical, and then sentimental ! What next ?

Old Hicks says he never saw any thing like this among the animals of the wilderness but once before, and then they were deer and antelopes ; for the buffaloes, elks, and bears are more migratory in their habits, and therefore less unsophisticated.

He says there is a larger valley than this appears to be not far from our route ahead, where he once, while a prisoner, found them so tame that he shot twenty with arrows before he could make the flock understand that there was danger in him. That valley he describes as much more securely fenced in than this by mountain-

ous precipices, and says that the Indians never learned of its existence from him. He found it by accident, and kept the secret to himself. He used to visit it privately and kill much game, which he would bring in with him, greatly to the astonishment of the Indian hunters; and he thereby gained from them a great reputation for skill and success.

I determined at once that there should be no shooting at these creatures with our rifles; but when it was necessary to kill one for food, the doctor's air-gun should alone be used, so that they might be as little frightened as possible, and we would thus obtain our food at less risk from the Indians. We let them go on to drink without frightening them; and as they were returning, I selected one that had lagged behind the rest, and shot it down. The others went on, seeming to be nothing the wiser.

The elks would not come near us, though they seemed to be rather suspicious than alarmed. Whenever they came in sight, they stood still and took a look at us; then the buck in the lead came a little nearer, and, after stamping its feet and shaking its huge horns at us, as if in defiance, ejected a sort of low, or snort, and went off at a slow trot, followed by the herd. The old fellow was not to be taken with salt on his tail, any how.

The doctor had seen no buffalo, yet there were indications of their being in the valley in great numbers. I thence conjectured that it was of far greater extent than he was disposed to imagine; for how could the large herds of these animals find access to and egress from the valley—if they ever left it at all—except by ways that were equally easy to antelopes and deer? I, therefore, determined to explore the valley further and thoroughly, so soon as we were able to move again.

In the mean time, we completed our camping arrangements. We found a niche, or recess, in the bluff, which not only afforded us shelter, but answered admirably as a fire-place; for since we were aware that the Indians knew of our whereabouts, we de-

terminated to brave it out, and attempt to make no secret of our smoke.

They had, no doubt, sent up signal smokes enough to report us to whatever detachments of the tribes might be abroad in the country. Indeed, just before sundown, we saw several of these smokes rising from behind the ridges, on the same side the spies had disappeared. Hicks, Alexander, and myself determined to scale the knobs at the nearest point, and see if we could discover any thing of them.

We waded the river, and with considerable trouble climbed the opposite bank, by clinging to the vines and shrubbery growing on its face. The sun was just setting as we reached the top of the hill, which was both very steep and very high. We looked down from it on a scene which I shall not soon or easily forget.

The sun was setting behind a horizon of low, round-backed ridges far below our feet. From the steep base of the mountain, as it might be termed, on which we stood, commenced a succession of mound-like ridges, which looked as if they might have been thrown up in regular furrows by some mighty plow behemoth should have drawn. Down these small valleys, or furrows, little rills came flashing through the deep, green shrubbery that fringed their edges. The ridges were bare of any growth but grass, and rose gradually toward the west, tier above tier, like the seats of some vast amphitheater.

Sheer below we could catch glimpses of a stream about the size of that on which lay our camp, and which seemed to be formed by the rivulets. It dashed the foam of its restlessness against the foot of the mountain, and found its way on toward the south, following that line of their course.

We were at first so absorbed by the grandeur of this picture, and dazzled, withal, by the rays of the setting sun thrown up into our faces, that we did not perceive what was an object of far more immediate interest to us just then. An Indian encampment lay

just below us, along the side of one of those steppes, or ridges, we have mentioned.

We could see down into it, and the warriors looked almost like black ants bustling about the sides of an ant-hill, and their horses like so many beetles they were dragging into their store-house. They were just staking out their horses, and making preparations for the night.

We immediately withdrew out of sight of them; for we were standing in full view, if they should happen to look up. We discovered no indication that we had been perceived, and concealed our persons behind some shrubbery, from whence we still had a view of their movements.

After we had observed the movements in the camp below us for some time in profound silence, I asked Old Hicks, in a low voice, what tribe he supposed them to be. The old Nestor shook his wise head, and answered, curtly, "Don't know; too dark to tell from here."

I caught instantly at this remark, for it chimed in precisely with an idea of adventure which had suddenly taken hold upon me. I said to Hicks, quietly, while I looked him steadily in the eye, "Then, if it be too dark to see who they are from here, why not endeavor to get near the camp to-night, and satisfy ourselves as to their number, purposes, and all that. What do you say, old man? They can't follow us up the mountain, even if we are discovered."

I could perceive that the veteran's eye lit for an instant with the fires of younger times, and then, standing on tiptoe, he stretched his neck, and looked down the precipitous mountain side long and steadily through the gathering gloom of nightfall; then, turning to me, shook his head doubtfully, and said

"Can't be done, captain—too steep—can't git down thar."

I pointed to the moon, which was just rising. "See that, old fellow! we can do it. We shall have plenty of light soon. You and I can go where the wild cats can, and we can send Alexander back to the boys to tell them where we are gone!"

“But a wild cat couldn’t git down these here mountains by daylight; can’t be done, captain!” he answered, bluffly.

I was taller than Hicks, and had observed that there was a deep, dry gully, which seemed to be the channel of the mountain rains emptying into the stream below. I pointed it out to him silently. He had not observed it before. A sort of grim smile crossed his features, and he chuckled as he looked curiously into my face.

“He! he! w-e-l-l—that might do! you’re in arnest, *ain’t* you, captain?”

“Yes, I am, Hicks,” said I, emphatically; “and I want to go down there and see if we can’t find some way to surprise these fellows. They intend to give us trouble, and it will be well enough for us to be prepared to give them as good as they send. We can get back by midnight; and if we have made any satisfactory discoveries, we can take two more men back with us, and carry their camp so soon as the warriors leave to attack us in the morning. They will have to go a long way round before they can get into our valley on their horses. We might do all the mischief we want, and be back again, across the mountain, before they reach our camp! Don’t you think so?”

“Well,” he drawled out, with a grin, as he tightened his waist-belt; “we-l-l, I think we can try, any how!”

“That’s you, my old blood-hound!” said I, greatly pleased, and slapping him familiarly on the shoulder.

“Alex, will you go back to the boys, have the horses kept close, and all of you keep your eyes skinned for an attack? You take charge of the camp, and don’t let any man leave it to hunt, or for any other reason. We shall whistle three times when we approach you to-night!”

To my surprise, Alexander did not seem to like the idea of being sent back at all. He answered, moodily,

“The boys are not bairns; they ken well to take care o’ themselves!”

I appreciated the generous impulse of the sturdy Scot, who did not fancy seeing us go off on this perilous enterprise without sharing its dangers with him. I exerted my best eloquence to convince him that this was the safest course for us and for those we had left behind, who would be uneasily expecting our return. The appeal to his sense of duty to his comrades told at once upon the gallant fellow, and he agreed to return. The moon was now well up, and we parted—he making his way back to camp, while we cautiously threaded the comb of the ridge, to reach the gully of which I have spoken.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ADVENTURE.

To the strict disciplinarian, it no doubt sounds strangely enough to hear the officer reasoning with and persuading his men, instead of ordering them ; but it must be remembered that there are more kinds of discipline than one.

Respect, confidence, and esteem, when established between the officers and the men of an expedition organized as this, are worth far more to both than all the stringent axioms of military law. The dependence is mutual, and obedience voluntary.

When he who leads is worthy to lead, his men will follow. It is only in the extremes of action that an arbitrary command is given or expected to be obeyed ; at other times, the men must see the reason of a thing before they do it, and he would be laughed at as an officer who attempted to enforce a petty discipline upon men, many of whom know, from greater experience, what should be done far better than himself.

He only stands, in reality, as the representative of the united sense of the company ; as such they have elected him, and in this character alone they defer to him. He has a limited discretion, and in proportion as he appears to use it wisely, more and more, unconsciously on their parts, is conceded to him.

But this digression has not speeded us much on our way down the mountain ravine. The sides of the mountain were covered with a scrubby growth of ever-greens, which sprang up wherever it could find place to hold by in the seams of the broken rocks.

There was just light enough for us to see the great cleft of the ravine from the place where we paused above its source on the crest of the ridge. It looked dark and steep, but yet we were not disposed to shrink from the descent for shadows. We slung our guns across our shoulders, and determined to trust to the stems and roots of ever-greens or clefts of the rock for ladders, and go down legitimately, or fall down, as might be.

Being the younger and more active of the two, I, of course, insisted upon leading the way. After the first ten feet of the descent, the darkness increased with astonishing rapidity, as clouds came drifting up before the moon, until we suddenly found ourselves suspended over a rayless void, with nothing of earth to cling to but the frail, uncertain ladder we had risked.

We were below the level of the moon's clouded rays, and had nothing to trust to but our sense of touch for finding a foot-hold. After first trying the strength of the objects below me with my feet, I would let my weight down upon it; then, letting my body down from that point, would feel about me with my toes for another resting-place, and often had to swing to and fro by my arms before I would find one that could be trusted. I would then wait till Old Hicks was safe, and launch out again.

In this way we descended some thirty feet, when I felt that I had gained a broader footing. The darkness was so intense that I dared not step out for fear of plunging down some fatal gulf. So, falling on my hands and knees, I commenced groping through the utter darkness, with one hand before me at a time.

A little while sufficed to convince me that we had reached the bottom of the ravine, for I felt the wall on both sides. I called to the old man to come to me, and we soon joined hands. Our cautious descent had occupied considerable time, and the moon, which had been clouded as by a gathering storm, now broke forth, and revealed to us that we stood at the foot of a precipice, down which it seemed the mountain waters had fallen in a clear cataract leap some forty feet.

The sides of the gully had been cut through the earth and loose pebbles sheer down to the firm sandstone crust of the mountain. It was about ten feet in width at this place, and large bowlders of stone were scattered along its descending bed. These would assist us much in getting down, as they afforded us something like steps.

We should never have dared this perilous descent had we noticed any indications of a coming storm before we attempted it. But now we had a break in the clouds ; and as the worst that we could look for, in getting down, had probably been passed, we determined to go on at any rate, and risk what might yet come. It looked bad enough ; but, after climbing down that bluff through the black night, we felt, by the contrast of danger passed, and of comparative safety now, refreshed and strong for any thing.

The clouds drifted away toward the east, and we pushed on down the ravine with just light enough to see our way and secure our footing.

We toiled on with painful caution for an hour.

We could now, a long way yet below us, catch an occasional view of the stream in the valley upon which the moonlight fell. We quickened our steps, as this at least indicated that we could not be far from our destination.

The sides of the ravine had become deeper and deeper as we had descended, until now we seemed to be sunk into the very bowels of the mountain, and the moon looked down upon us from her place directly above, as if in mercy she would pilot us on our darkened way.

We could hear the roar of the stream just below us at last, and through the deep rift see flashes of the Indian fires beyond, when a deep rumbling sound, followed by a tremendous burst of thunder, which made the mountain shake, announced that the storm, which had been so fitfully threatening during the night, was about to burst.

Broad sheets of lightning lit up with dazzling distinctness the whole valley upon which we were descending, bringing every bare

undulation, every shrub-fringed rivulet, every break and seam, every blade of grass, all the minute details of the Indian camp, close up to our eyes, as it were, in one prolonged flash.

I shall never forget the vivid lines in which all the picture was then revealed. The dull glow of the camp fires—the forms of the Indians grouped around them in repose—some of them roused by the thunder, and half rising from their sleep—their horses with pricked ears and startled eyes—it seemed to me in that quick glimpse that I had counted all, and could even tell the features of many. I was sure that I saw the form of a woman among them, who did not seem as if she should be there, and felt as if I could reach her with my hands across the gulf and tear her away from their midst.

Even when the unutterable darkness followed, I imagined I could see upon it the delicate face, with a keen, half-frightened glance, looking steadily at me, as if in wonder and reproach. Although my common sense reacted in a moment, and told me that this must be an illusion, yet through all the terrors of the night that image never deserted me for a moment.

But at once the windows of heaven seemed to be opened, and the rain came down in a pitiless flood, such as I had never witnessed before. We were drenched through in an instant, and at the same time a terrible wind came howling up the pass and dashed the rain drops like whip-lashes against our faces.

We were half blinded before, between the mingled glare and blackness; but this scourging and uproarious wind, with the quick, continuous rattle of sky-artillery on the mountain top, stunned and confused us to that degree that we forgot every thing for a while but our own terrors, and staggered to and fro in awed confusion.

Whither should we flee? what could we do?

Earth shook as if in terror of the heavens, and why should not we?

The cleft in which we were was many feet deep, and its banks had appeared, to our momentary sight of them, entirely precipitous. We could hear the gathering waters from above tumble with a deepening roar over the bluff down which we had so rashly climbed.

It would soon be a cataract, and then its flood would hurl us along with it into the abyss below, unless we could escape from its path.

Hicks and myself had become separated. The time had come when it was "every man for himself, and God for us all!"

I shouted to him in vain, for the wind seemed to deaden the sound of my voice as it tore the words from my lips.

The water was already up to my knees, and rushed by at such speed that I felt my steps were fast being unsteadied. I groped blindly along, clinging with a desperate grip, as my gait was becoming more and more hurried and uncertain, to whatever projection I could feel along the side of the ravine.

The inexorable waters rose yet faster, and the clangor of the tempest grew wilder still. My strength was failing rapidly, and I felt that I must soon go down upon the foam of this dark, maddened whirl.

I was lifted from my feet and shot away. Quicker than thought, I felt a stunning blow!

I was insensible, I suppose, but for a moment, and waked amid the roaring darkness, nearly strangled by the water which was dashing over my face.

I had been carried against some yielding object which was strong enough to hold me, and swayed up and down in the current, lifting my face now and then above the water.

I grappled with the clutch of despair, and found it was a tree. A flash of lightning showed me that it had fallen from the caving in of the bank, and that the roots seemed yet to hold firmly.

By a great exertion of my enfeebled energies, I drew myself up by the limbs out of the rush of the current. The tree was small,

and it felt as if it were giving way with every movement I made. But a drowning man has no time to stop for calculating chances.

As I worked my way up with the clinging energy of despair, I distinctly remember hearing, above all the terrible tumult of wild noises, a sound that must have been very close above me, and which called up, amid other causes of fear, that of my close proximity to some large beast of prey ; the sound resembled the sputtering sneeze with which such an animal would relieve its nostrils and throat of water. However, I forgot the incident, in gratitude at finding myself beyond the reach of the waters, and soon stood upon the stem where it clung by the roots to the bank.

I expected it every instant to give way, and felt eagerly above me in the dark for some new support.

It was slowly sinking under my feet, when, with a shout of joy, I felt the stem of another tree, and grasped it with one hand, while that on which I stood plunged down and left me swinging.

I did not require much time to secure a footing by the aid of this new support, and then feeling further, felt others in reach, and soon found myself a firm foothold on the shelving slope of the mountain.

So soon as I felt that I had secured this much, I was content to be still ; for, in the darkness, I knew it was risking too much to move on such ground. I was well enough content to be out of that raging torrent, and, indeed, felt too weak to move further, had it been otherwise safe, for I was severely bruised.

The only course left for me was to sit still upon the steep wet ground, with my feet against one tree and my back against another, listening to the mad howls of the raging tempest.

This was poor comfort, certainly ; and this was not particularly increased by the apprehension that Old Hicks had met with a terrible fate.

Since we had parted in the ravine, I could only conjecture of his fate. The noise of the tempest had been so deafening, that it

was out of the question to suppose that he had either heard my voice or could have made his own heard above the din. The brave old man had probably been whirled into the stream below and torn to pieces against the rocks.

It was almost too much good luck for a single night to hope that he had met with the same sort of fortune which had befallen myself, or could possibly have escaped in any other way.

It was a grievous loss to contemplate.

A sad tale I should have to take back to the men—our guide gone; upon whose sagacity and large experience we had all depended so much in this perilous undertaking!

Drenched and shivering as I was, I forgot it all as that white-haired form came up to my memory, presented in so many striking positions as the rescuer, or the hero of the most perilous scenes of my late life. I could have wept and raved when I remembered that it was at my importunity this last and most rash adventure had been undertaken against the dictates of his own experience and prudence.

It was I, then, who had sacrificed him to a vague and restless impulse! How shall I face the men again who love him as a father! How shall I account for his blood to little Molly and John; now, indeed, the forlorn orphans of that wild frontier! They shall be my children—I will be a father to them; with my life's labor I will make them some amends!

With such self-reproaches, and the most melancholy forebodings, I had been so preoccupied as not to have observed that the tempest had subsided. When recalled to myself, it was by the strange stillness around, which, as I had been so absorbed, now seemed to me the work of an instant magic.

It was as if I had waked from the dream of a Miltonian battle—from amid the raging of a hell let loose, to be scourged back by avenging angels to its chains—to find myself listening to my own heart beat in the silence of the void of darkness.

I was startled into a shiver of awe at the sudden change. I could not see my hands before me. The huge masses of cloud hung a thick funereal midnight across the sky.

I did not yet dare to move. I strained my ears to listen for the roar of the angry torrent down the defile, of the volume and the power of which I had so lately learned through a dreadful experience.

After some little time, I could distinguish a faint trickling sound, as of a feeble rill.

Could it be that all was a dream? Perhaps I had been deafened by the thunder? Was this the only sound left to tell of that fatal cataract that had swept Old Hicks away, and would have dashed me to atoms but for the accident of the fallen tree? Strange indeed! I must be within a few feet of its brink. I had not moved. But hark! and I recognized the murmur of the stream in the valley below, almost as it had sounded before the tempest came. Perhaps the ripple was a little more rapid; or perhaps I was nearer. What could this mean?

Ah! these mountain storms are terrible, and throw down deluges as they go by; but then they are swift of wing, and all is soon over!

The mountain torrent has run out and left its bed, which will be dry with the earliest sun to-morrow.

This was the explanation my after thought suggested, and it proved to be the true one.

Now other sounds than those of the tempest and the running water began to make themselves heard, and I felt at first somewhat relieved that a neighboring wild cat should have announced its presence, though it was in a most dolorous and half-drowned mew.

But by the spurs of a Texan knight! I had not long to congratulate myself that said forlorn wild cat and my forlorn self were the only denizens of this waste and most sooty wilderness. Now

soon the cry of this creature was answered in other quarters, at first in the same drenched tones, and then more boldly.

Very soon an owl chimed in with an interrogatory, too—whoo? while another answered, a little less timidly, too—whoo; and then a third, which seemed to have by this time acquired a sort of spasmodic bravery, shouted out the whole chorus, *ore rotundo*—too whoo—too whoo—too whit!

Now a panther close by threw in the delicate cadence of a scream, prolonged into a quavering screech that made my very hair bristle!

These were sociable and companionable sounds enough, considering how black it was before my eyes; but, when all at once I saw a pair of shining eyes answering to my own from the darkness, I felt my heart leap into my throat “instanter,” and each particular hair upon my body becoming fretful.

Horror! it must be the panther! That one that sputtered almost in my face as it climbed out of the torrent just before me! The ungrateful savage—to be thinking of blood already, after having made such a narrow escape! He has scented me out, and, may be, has sent his “belly-pinched” ravenous mate to see to my health. Ah, hospitable wilderness!

It has scented me out, too, and here I am *vis-a-vis* with one of these sugary-mouthed wailers, who always are like Raehaels in the wilderness, weeping for their children, and refusing to be comforted because food is not—luscious tender food of man’s flesh, I fear me!

I suppose as *I am*, that now the white-fanged weeper has ceased “to pour her dolours forth,” and closed that huge, red gap of death, and moans with the firm determination of being comforted at my expense, even for her “freckled whelps” and for herself!

Save us from such maternal solitudes! Shall I fire at those eyes? But my gun is wet; it won’t go off!

O dilemma of dilemmas! Bed of roses that I rest upon! Pleasant to sit here, gazing on those live fire-spots, and afraid to budge or wink!

How long before I shall see them gleaming toward my face when the wretch makes its hungry leap?

I was shivering with fear, but still I had nerve left to loosen and noiselessly unsheath my bowie-knife, as the only weapon upon which I could now rely. With this in my hand, my courage somewhat rose. The two eyes burned on with a steady light, and seemed not to change their position for an instant. My sharpened hearing had detected once or twice very faint sounds, as if the animal were moving slightly, as I had done; but I could not see that the eyes changed their place, or came any nearer.

Of all the terrors crowded into a life of adventure, perhaps this was the most unnerving I had yet been called upon to face.

From my previous knowledge of the habits of the panther, I supposed that it was now crouched, and stealthily watching for some movement on my part, which would be to it the signal for a spring.

I could hear nothing else now, nor see any thing but those eyes. Though once or twice the idea flashed across my mind that perhaps the eyes were too close together for those of the panther, yet my imagination was too much excited by terror to permit my regarding or dwelling upon so nice a distinction long.

Chilled as I had been, I could feel the perspiration rolling down my face, and my limbs trembling through the two mortal hours during which the darkness continued unbroken, and the eyes shone on.

I thought I should have grown gray in those two centuries of dread. Sometimes, when my unwinking gaze grew weak, I saw a myriad of eyes that looked on me from trees and sky; and then, again, the whole of them would converge suddenly toward one burning center, and I would see ring upon ring widen around that solitary fire-spot, until all was one orbed blaze of varied and terrible splendor, and I felt a dizzy longing to precipitate myself into its inthralling vortex.

Soon again, by a strong exertion of my will, I could recall my senses from the unbridled lead of my overwrought imagination, and then I could clearly see that the eyes appeared just as they did before—still and bright. Now first the conviction flashed upon me, that all the stories I had heard of men, birds, and animals being charmed by the eyes of serpents, were owing to a misinterpretation of the cause ; that the effects contended for rested rather in the excited fears of the charmed than in the powerful spell of the charmer. Fear is the bewilderer in all such cases.

The darkness began, at last, to break away. It may seem strange to some that I should have time to philosophize under such circumstances of agonizing suffering. But my experience has always shown me that, under any great excitement of the passions, the imagination acts with a proportionate exaggeration, though as a separate life, which observes for itself, calmly, the influences of the other upon it, and deduces from the chaos truth, by the subtle processes of a higher ratiocination.

Be this as it may, as the daylight opened, what should my charmer prove to be but Old Hicks himself, who was sitting in about the same position that I held, and a little lower down the bank. The old fellow's sharp eyes winked very long and sleepily, like waning stars, when I first made them out through the opening haze ; but they lit up quickly enough when I sprang to my feet and burst into a hearty laugh !

“ I've been thinking you were a panther all night, old boy ! Why didn't you speak ? ”

“ Why didn't *you* ? ” was the very pertinent reply.

“ Why, I was so sure you were safe enough in Davy Jones's locker that I felt superstitious about calling to you, for fear your ghost might take offense ; but you thought I was a panther, too, didn't you ? ” I asked, as I shook the old hero's hand in an ecstasy of delight.

“ We-l-l, yes ! ” he drawled out, with a mischievous twinkle in

his now wide-awake eye ; " I thought you was some cussed varmint or other that was waitin' for me to wink, and almost had to prop my eyes open with sticks, I was so sleepy."

" You drifted against that tree that had caved in, didn't you ?"

" Yes ! and you ?"

" Did the same ; and, as there were no more rangers to save, it gave way under me just at the right time. But what sort of a 'cussed varmint' did you take me for, old man ?"

" We-l-l, I've seed painters' eyes before, and I know'd youn wan't them ; they wan't wide enough apart. I didn't know much what to think, unless you was an Indian ; I only know'd there was danger in the eyes, because they kept so still."

" How did you feel ?"

" Felt like busting them out, if my powder hadn't been wet !" said he, dryly.

" Just the favor I should have done your peepers had my powder been dry !"

" I only thought of shooting at first !" said the old fellow, with a sly leer ; " for I seed that the creetur' was badly skeered, from the way its eyes flared !"

I felt this joke had so much truth, that I only laughed heartily at it.

" But, old man ! what a horrible sputtering that was you made as you were climbing up just before me ! I have heard of western men who, besides the amazing accomplishment of drinking the Mississippi dry at a single draught, could also out-sneeze the thunder ! I did not know before that you were one of such."

" Pooh, cap'en ! what if I did sneeze ?" he said, chuckling. " One of the ' boys' would have made a decent job of that sort out of it ; but when the water came so 'cussed' fast that it brought the big rocks along, and went knocking his teeth down his throat, he'd have thought it was time to sneeze, I'm a thinking !"

" I should think so myself."

The thing was ridiculous enough. Two men sitting for hours opposite, in the dark, each mistaking the other for some wild beast, and afraid to move, or, almost, indeed, to breathe ; while, in addition to the terror such a neighborhood naturally inspired, each was grieving for the other as dead.

Old Hicks, who was lighter, or less vigorous than myself, had been lifted from his feet soonest, and, as the fallen tree reached nearly across the ravine, he, too, had been thrown against it, and had found such difficulty in getting out, and, indeed, thought the chance of his escape was so narrow, that he never for a moment dreamed that I, too, might meet it.

However, we were both too much accustomed to such exigences to dwell upon them when they were once passed.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FRENCHWOMAN.

THE sun was now rising, and the rain-drops, pendant from the leaves, glittered in welcome to its cheerful rays. The mists below us were lifted, and soon the Indian camp became visible. All was activity there ; and now, for the first time, we understood why the Indians, contrary to their established usages, were so reckless about their fires and the smoke.

It was a strong party, apparently numbering over one hundred and fifty warriors ; and as they knew our strength precisely, and were perfectly confident of being able to overwhelm us when they chose, they had not thought it necessary to make any secret of their presence.

From the point at which we had first perceived them, it had been impossible for us to judge of their strength ; for small parties frequently have with them many horses, and they were all mixed up together.

We remained quiet, concealed behind the shrubbery and trees, and watched the preparations of the warriors for their departure. They were soon collected, and made a very formidable show as they dashed off toward the east, no doubt to gain some accessible crossing-place into our valley.

We heard very distinctly their hoarse war-cry when they started ; and, so long as we could see them, they were brandishing their long lances in the air, and shaking their white shields of buffalo-hide over their heads, with every other demonstration of savage fury their irate and grotesque humors could suggest.

"These fellows are bound for mischief!" said Old Hicks, quietly.

"Yes," I remarked; "but they have left their camp unprotected; let's see if we can't do them some, in the mean time; I think the boys will keep them off until we get back."

In spite of my better reason, the image of that strange woman's face, the lightning, or my vivid imagination, had revealed to me last night, continued to present itself, and, half unconsciously, to give tone to my resolve.

Although Old Hicks insisted that our destruction of the Indian camp would not help the boys any in defending themselves, yet I persisted that we would have time to make a descent upon it, and still get back in season to relieve them.

I must confess, that I did not myself see very clearly what good we were to do ourselves or our party by killing a few wounded or superannuated warriors; driving off the mules and horses they had left, and which we could never get up the mountain, or carrying off plunder which we could do nothing with; yet, strangely enough, I was moved by a restless and undefined impulse, which vaguely urged me to go on—on!

I insisted so warmly, that the old man finally, with a dubious shake of the head, assented, and we commenced descending to the river. We went down into the bed of the ravine at the place where its bank had caved in, so opportunely for us both.

It seemed almost a miracle that we should have succeeded in climbing up such a place in the dark; for it was, even now, sufficiently difficult to get down, with the broad daylight to help us. We found the leap, which the angry waters that had threatened us must have made, was deep enough to make us shiver at the thought of going over it under such headway; though we found that the same jutting and ragged points of rock, which would have torn us into fragments then, afforded now a steady means of descent, like irregular stairs.

We reached the bed of the narrow river, and found that, though

swift, it was shallow, in spite of all the rain that had fallen. On the opposite bank, we saw that low chaparrals of musquit timber, mingled with cactus, extended to within a short distance of the undulations, upon the first of which lay the Indian camp.

We waded the river, and were soon concealed in the chaparral. After creeping tediously through its tangles for over a hundred yards, and being most abominably scratched by the thorns and stiff brush, we reached a point from which we commanded a near and minute view of the Indian camp.

It did not take us long, from our near position, to perceive that we had most egregiously miscalculated the numbers left behind for its protection. We had been like the Irishman who attempted to count the litter of pigs, and now complained that "one of 'em wouldn't stand still to be counted."

The confusion of horses, mules, women, children, and men had prevented us from forming a true estimate; and, instead of a few aged and wounded warriors, we could now see some fifty stout fellows lounging about, with lance in one hand, the shield on the other, and the bow and quiver showing over their naked shoulders.

This sight was something of a poser; and my fine-spun projects of a surprise were all most promptly dispelled.

What could we two men do with all these greasy athletæ? We could only back out as quietly as possible—of course!

And, after a short consultation, we were preparing to do so, when we perceived a figure, which was evidently that of a woman, separate itself from the confusion of the camp, and start in the direction of our ambush, with a calabash in her hand, as if she were going for water.

The idea of taking her a prisoner quietly, without alarming the camp, and getting from her all the information I desired, instantly suggested itself to me, and we laid still to await her approach.

Hicks in vain remonstrated, that if we attempted to take an Indian squaw, she would, of course, sound the alarm, and that, even

if we captured her quietly, she could not, and indeed would not, afford us any information. I was determined, any how, to abide the result, and wait for her.

I observed that the woman was directly approaching a narrow opening between the chaparrals, and near which we lay concealed. There was something in her appearance, at that distance even, that made my blood flow faster.

The costume was evidently not that of an Indian.

This was all I had time to observe, when a sudden commotion arose in the Indian camp; some of them, who seemed to be the squaws, were pointing, with vehement gestures, toward the figure which was approaching us. Then, after clustering together for a moment, as if in consultation, they first shouted, as if to recall the woman, and as she paid no attention, but rather quickened her pace, several of the warriors started after her.

The fugitive, as I now perceived her to be, had been looking back over her shoulders furtively; and the moment she saw the warriors start, she herself sprang away with the swiftness of an antelope.

The howl of pursuit was raised, and in an instant every being in the camp was on foot and had joined in the chase.

She was a prisoner attempting to escape!

I comprehended all in a moment! The vision of last night! Ah! what would I not risk to save her and drive back that greasy horde?

Hicks and myself exchanged a quick intelligence, in which each read the same purpose in the other's eyes, and in another instant stood with our fresh-primed pieces on the edge of the chaparral, ready to throw ourselves between her and her pursuers.

On she came, with her long hair streaming on the wind of her swift-footed flight.

The calabash had been dropped as soon as the pursuit commenced, and we now, for the first time, perceived that she carried in her hand a warrior's lance, which she had before been trailing behind her.

Swift as she was, the foremost warrior was close upon her before she came opposite our place of concealment. I perceived him about to throw his lance, and was in the act of stepping forward to shoot him, when I saw her stoop suddenly to the earth, and the lance pass harmlessly over her. She then faced about rapidly, and with a quick thrust transfixed the headlong savage, and, leaving the lance in his reeling body, sped past us like an arrow.

I was so much astonished at this extraordinary exhibition of agility and daring on the part of the woman, that I immediately shouted a delighted cheer as we stepped forth.

She saw us, and, uttering a faint cry, rushed on with even greater speed.

I fired at the nearest Indian, and tumbled him, while Old Hicks retained his load. At the sound of my voice and rifle, the howling rush halted, and commenced falling back. We began a rapid retreat for the river, and, before they could recover from their astonishment, had obtained a considerable start.

So soon, however, as they perceived that there were only two of us, the pursuit was renewed with the most furious cries. It was our best policy not to run, for that would only have given confidence to them. We therefore retreated in a rapid walk, and whenever they came too close, Old Hicks turned and presented his rifle. They would halt at this, while I had time to reload.

Once, however, they came on so close that the old man was obliged to fire. When the warrior fell, the mob roared with rage, and seemed, as by a single impulse, about to precipitate themselves upon us. They thought our guns must now be unloaded, and that they were sure of us. I promptly undeceived them by firing a second time. They did not recoil this time, as usual; and seeing they were determined to close with us at any rate, I looked behind, and perceived that we were within a short distance of the river bank.

Drawing our pistols, we now made a run for the water, and so

close were they, that, as we sprang off the bank into the river, half a dozen lances were hurled after us. I fired my pistol in their faces as I sprang off, which caused them to hesitate a moment, and then, with our faces to them, we commenced wading for the other bank. When we were about half way across, a number of the warriors leaped in to follow us, while a cloud of arrows from the bank whistled by us.

When we reached the other shore and obtained a footing on the rocks, we turned again to face them. On presenting our pistols, they dipped under the water, and held their white shields up over their heads. We recommenced our retreat, and when they rose, we turned again with the same results. We were quickly out of reach of the arrows from the other side, and answered their demoniac howls and gestures of disappointment with jeers of laughter, for we now felt secure, and knew they would not dare to follow us.

We had lost sight of the fugitive woman, but I perceived a wet trail up the rocks, which showed me that she had crossed before us. The Indians stood in the stream and on the bank, watching us for some moments, while we deliberately loaded our rifles and plucked out the arrows they had shot into our clothes and limbs. These we threw back toward them with scornful gestures; and when we again raised our rifles to our faces, they dived like a flock of ducks when a hawk swoops into their midst, and, holding up their shields for protection, commenced retreating toward the other bank, while those who were upon it threw themselves on their faces, and scattered, crawling away in the most ludicrous manner toward the chaparral.

We laughed heartily at this exhibition, and, not wishing to waste any more ammunition, turned and walked up the ravine to search for our fugitive.

I found myself considerably hurt by their arrows, one of which I feared, from the pain it gave me, had been poisoned. Old Hicks, however, promptly sucked the wound, which was in itself slight,

and the pain passed off. He, too, had been slightly hurt. But the strength of neither was much impaired, for the present at least. How it might be with us a few hours hence remained to be seen.

We could distinguish the traces of the woman's flight for some distance up the ravine. I could not help observing the delicate smallness of the wet foot marks she left upon the stones. So soon as we were out of sight, and thought ourselves free of the Indians, we commenced running, for the purpose of catching up with her; for I was by no means sure that she had understood us to be friends, from the terrified and hasty glance she had given us in passing.

It was in vain that we urged on at the top of our speed; we could discover nothing of her. At every turn of the ravine, as we strained, panting, up the steep, I expected to catch a glimpse of her form ahead.

When we passed the place of our last night's escape, I paused for a moment, to examine if there were any traces of her having clambered up, but could perceive none. There was no other place I could recollect where it was possible to scale the ravine, until the bluff we had descended in entering it had been reached. Therefore, I felt pretty sure that she must be ahead of us in the ravine, and we ran on up it, with might and main, determined, if possible, to overtake her before she left it.

I can not consistently explain why I felt so strange an interest in the fate of this unknown person; all I know is, that I did feel such an interest, and that I would rather have died than lose her.

When we came in sight of that bluff at the head of the ravine, the perilous descent of which I have described, we were almost exhausted by our long run, and had been compelled into a slow walk.

Just before we reached the foot of the bluff, I observed slight traces of blood, marking the pebbles and sharp fragments of rock scattered over the bed of the ravine.

This reassured me.

Poor creature ! her naked feet have been cut in the rapid flight by these cruel stones ; she is still before us, though ! I looked up the bluff from its base, and about ten feet up, to my great joy, I perceived the woman we had been pursuing, half hid behind a large mass of stone, into a cleft of which she had forced her body.

She held quite a large, round pebble in her small hand, which was upraised threateningly above her head, as if in the act of hurling it into our faces. I could distinguish an expression of unutterable defiance in the flashing of her keen black eyes, and the firm compression of her thin, delicate lips.

I saw at once, from the fairness of her complexion, not only that she was not an Indian, but felt that her's must be the face which had been revealed to me last night, and which had so possessed my imagination. I could distinguish that she was a clear brunette, and evidently a foreigner.

I signed first to her as eloquently as I knew how to express friendship and good-will by gestures. She paid no attention to my gestures, but sharply asked, in French,

“Qui etes vous ?”

I speak French very lamely, and answered as best I could, “Texans, Americans, et amis !”

“Why do you not speak English at once, then ?” said she, with a clear accent and shrill voice, which expressed something of irritation.

“Because you spoke to me in French, and are evidently a foreigner. But you must have seen that we are friends, any how ; for did we not drive the Indians back ?”

“I thought you were about as much savages as they, from your appearance,” said she, with a half smile.

The sweet irradiation of her beautiful face at that moment filled me with mingled astonishment and delight.

“Will you permit us to join you ?” said I, with an expression of deference it would have been difficult for me to account for at

the time. "We would be glad, savages as we seem, to show you the way to our camp, which is over the mountain."

"Ah!" said she, with an elated look, stepping forth from her concealment, "you belong to the camp of Americans I have heard of as being over in the valley?"

"We do, madam," I answered, with an involuntary increase of the respect which her cool, imperious, and commanding bearing was impressing upon me, and which was no little heightened by the recollection of that daring feat of hers I had just witnessed. "We do, madam, and shall feel ourselves honored in being able to assist you in any way; as for protection, you seem to be quite able to take care of yourself."

She smiled brightly, threw away her pebble, and came bounding down the rocks to join us.

As much of hardihood as I was certainly prepared to expect from this extraordinary being, I was yet surprised to perceive no signs of halting in her gait as she approached us. What did those blood marks on the pebbles mean? She gave me but few seconds to speculate upon this point, before she was standing by my side and coquettishly patting my cheek.

"You are captain of the Americans?" she said, with an expression half of assertion, half of inquiry. Then turning to Hicks, "And this old man knows more than you, don't he?"

"Yes, he does," said I, laughing heartily at this *naïve* way of mixing up assertions with questionings. "He does know a great deal more than I *out here*, though I *am* captain."

"Then why are you captain?" said she, with a roguish look.

"Because, madam," said I, drawing myself up with an air of burlesque pomposity, "because I am '*un gentilhomme*,' ahem!"

"*Oui, oui*. I see! I see!" said she, laughing with the clear ringing twitter of a French woman's laugh, "*un grand capitaine*!"

Then caressing my cheek again, pettishly, with her small brown

hand, she asked, "*Un grand capitaine* will not eat me, will he?"

The raillery of her tone failed with the last sentence, and, as the final word was spoken, the piquant smile faded into pallor on her face, and she sunk, with closed eyes, upon my arm.

I was about to answer, smilingly, in the same vein; but, of course, all pleasantry was now arrested.

She had fainted from fatigue; and certainly it was not astonishing that this should be so, when we consider what a run she made of it in her despair.

The distance from the Indian camp, the crossing of the river, the panic-stricken flight up the ravine, the traces of blood on the pebbles, furnished, all together, sufficiently touching reason why even a vivid and daring French woman should at last sink down, leaving out of question the idea of mental excitement, which, with her, is so entirely a matter of course, as not properly to be considered along with these physical causes.

Indeed, a French woman is a sort of spiritual salamander, flourishing most amid the flames.

Our rather peculiar specimen had proven herself game to the last, and true to her coquettish instincts; for, instead of appealing to us, she had commanded us; instead of exhibiting surprise at our unexpected meeting, she had seemed to regard it as she would one of the sudden transitions in the scenes of a vaudeville, and with her nimble fancy had at once translated two rough backwoodsmen into proper subjects of feminine witchery; and, finally, through fainting from exhaustion, had sunk down with a sprightly rally upon her lips.

"That's a gal for you," said Old Hicks, as he assisted me to lay her down. "She'd lick her weight in wild cats any time, though she'd grin their teeth out first with that purty mouth of hern."

"Water, old man!" said I, impatiently. "Water! see if you can find some around; there was enough here last night."

"Nateral enough you should take on so, captain," said he, as he walked off deliberately on the search. "She's a witchin' creatur for a young man to see—though you are worse scared than hurt—she'll soon come to!"

Her small, graceful head lay upon my shoulder, while the long and silky hair streamed in a raven cloud to my feet. She was very slightly clothed, since the only garment of civilization her captors had left her was something like a chemise of fine linen, which left the breast exposed and the arms naked; she, however, had thrown over her shoulders, as a cape, the brightly rozetted skin of an ocelot, but this had now fallen off.

From an instinct of delicacy, which does not desert even the rude backwoodsman, I swept her long hair as the most appropriate veil over her bosom. It was sacred to me! Her delicate face lay close to mine, and as her cold cheek touched me, I felt at first a shudder through my excited frame, and then, in an instant, an electric heat chased it to the surface as if my eager life would rush forth with all its glow, to fill her shrunk veins again with its warmth.

My senses were strangely confused, and I felt a wild, vague yearning toward the singular and beautiful being in my arms. There was no leaven of grossness in this tumult of sensation. It was mingled of the chastest admiration, surprise, and tenderness. I could have kissed her cold lips, and yet there would have been no pollution in the caress.

Old Hicks soon found some water in a hollow of the rocks, and returned with it in his greasy old hat.

For the instant, I was shocked at the idea of applying the water from such a basin to that pure face; but the wilderness has few nice alternatives, and I dashed it hastily upon her. In a few seconds she drew a long breath and opened her eyes. They flared wildly about her for a few moments, while she recalled her senses to the reality of such strange surroundings; then catching my eye,

which must have been beaming down upon her somewhat tenderly, they at once lightened, though something faintly, with the first expression of coquettish raillery.

“Ah! I see! *un grand capitaine!*” Then, in a fainter voice, as she closed her eyes heavily, “I have been sick?”

“Yes, a little; but you will soon be well now as ever. It is only exhaustion.”

“Yes,” said Old Hicks, taking her small hand in his rough, bony paw, “the captain’s right, my spunky gal. You’ll soon be up agin, and bright enough to stick another Camanche at that.”

She smiled feebly, and asked for some water to drink. Old Hicks at once lifted his hat and pressed its sides together, to make a convenient spout of the rim for her to drink out of, and presented it.

Weak as she was, I could perceive the French woman’s cat-like aversion to any thing unclean break across her face, but her intercourse with those filthy Indians had taught her some philosophy, and after slightly turning away her mouth, thirst overcame taste, and she applied it eagerly to this novel spout, and drank with famishing eagerness. This draught soon revived her, and in less than two minutes she was standing erect with the same air of cool, self-possessed assurance which had first attracted my admiration.

“I am well now, *un grand capitaine,*” said she, drawing herself up with a superb air, and then making me a low bow of mock deference; “very well, thanks to your magnificent self. Pray, what do you propose to do further with your humble prisoner and slave? But recollect, *grand capitaine,* that I surrendered only to your French and to your eyes; I should never have thrown down my arms, of course, but that you were, in these points, so irresistible.”

“You flatter me, mademoiselle; but, really, my irresistibility will be still more flattered if you will only agree to accompany us

to our camp, and accept whatever of rude comfort and sympathy we can give you."

"With pleasure, *capitaine*. But you had better consider that I may be rather a dangerous inmate for you. I may take it in my head, in revenge for my own capture, to captivate some half dozen of you at once, and then set you all together by the ears. Are you not afraid?"

"Not of being captivated, for I am so already."

"But this old man may be your rival."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Old Hicks, with a gay and uncouth sort of lurch of the body; "look out, capt'n, the gal 'll take to me for sartain; little Molly says I'm a beauty."

"Little Molly, whoever she is, says the truth. You dear old man, let me kiss you?" said she, bounding toward him mockingly, but with the most bewitching playfulness.

The old man stepped back, with his hand across his mouth, as if he really expected her to attempt to ravish a kiss; and then catching her light form in his brawny arms, he bore her toward the cliff, and, setting her down on her feet at the base, pointed up the rocks.

"Climb up there, you saucy minx! it's time we were off!"

She laughed gayly, and signaled him to go up first. He commenced the ascent, and I followed. I frequently turned to assist her, but she always refused, and showed herself sufficiently agile to make her own way.

We were not long in reaching the top; for daylight made a considerable difference as to the difficulties to be overcome either way. We made our way rapidly to the comb of the ridge, and in a short time stood upon the spot where we had parted with Alexander on the preceding evening.

The sun was considerably advanced toward noon. We could now again see down into the Indian camp, and far away into the valleys on both sides of the ridge. The Indian camp was all con-

fusion. They seemed to be but just returned from our pursuit, and were rushing to and fro, women, children, and horses, in the most inextricable maze.

We felt little interest in them, as we had baffled them, and caused this hubbub, which was, we knew, impotent, so far as we were concerned. After a slight glance in this direction, we looked toward our camp. It was just beyond the line of our vision, which was obstructed by the trees; but I could perceive one of our horses, which had ranged wider than the rest, feeding peacefully on the grass.

This was enough—as we recognized the animal, by its color, for the piebald steed of the redoubtable Teddy—to relieve us as to the present safety of our friends.

We had perceived all these indications in silence; and I was now looking out up the peaceful valley for any indications of the approach of the warriors whom we had seen set out, as we supposed, for the purpose of attacking our camp, early in the morning. I could perceive nothing which seemed to indicate their approach. Herds of wild animals dotted the plain, but they seemed to be grazing quietly, as they might be supposed to have done always. Indeed, on that side the scene all was brightness, calm, and repose.

I was turning, and about to commence a leisurely descent, when the Frenchwoman, who had followed my eye, and been gazing with her sharp, quick glance over the same scene, suddenly exclaimed,

“Look! look! what are those moving things?” and, at the same time, pointed up the valley.

I turned, and at first could perceive nothing; so with Old Hicks. But she persisted.

“There! just under the shadow of that long mott, near the foot of the mountains, on the right! They are the Indians, coming at full speed!”

“So they are!” said Hicks and I in the same breath. We commenced a rapid descent instantly.

We overcame the difficulties of our descent with marvelous facility under the impulsion of this new fear. There was, at least, the prospect that we might reach the camp before the Indians, and this hope gave additional elasticity to our movements. It unfortunately occurred, however, that, in our hurry, we missed the way of our ascent on the previous evening, when we, of course, came up with great coolness and circumspection.

It will be remembered that there was only one place at which it was possible to cross the river near the camp, and that, even here, the descent on our side was extremely difficult. In rushing through the shrubbery hurriedly, I, who was in the lead, missed this crossing, and went on some distance past it; and when we reached the river's brink, it was at a point where it was absolutely precipitous, and afforded us no possible means of descent, except by jumping off some fifty feet to the water, and then we should have been compelled to jump up again quite as high on the other side, supposing we got safe to the bottom.

The Indians were by this time clearly in view, coming on at a heady speed. I was in an agony, and feared that our men would be taken by surprise. I thought, first, of shouting, to warn them; but the distance was too great. We could only turn, plunge into the thick evergreens again, and grope our way back as best we might. It was groping with a vengeance! for the evergreens were higher than our heads, and so close that it was impossible to see three feet ahead. We, however, rushed on desperately, and tore our way through them, and were properly torn, too, in return.

Before we had emerged into view of the valley, we heard a faint reverberation, which sounded greatly like that of a Camanche war-whoop; then the echoes brought to us the sound of three shots, following each other at short intervals.

We now made a still more eager rush, which in a few seconds brought us through to the precise spot where we had ascended before. Here we could command a view of the scene on the other

side. One glance was sufficient. The Camanches were driving in our picket-guard before them.

I instantly swung myself off the bluff by a shrub, and commenced the descent. The woman followed me, and reached the river bed nearly as soon as I. Sharp and continuous firing from the camp was now heard, mingled with the yells of the Indians.

While we were hurriedly wading the river, the woman came to my side, reaching out her hand, while she struggled vehemently against the current.

"Give me your knife!" she said, imploringly; "give me your knife! quick!"

I could not help smiling at her eagerness, excited as I was, and drew my bowie-knife and one of my belt pistols, which I handed back to her. I had witnessed sufficient evidences of her prowess to feel convinced that she would make good use of them. As we approached nearer, the confused yelling and explosion of fire-arms became almost deafening.

I had now reached the opposite shore, and stood upon dry land, in the buffalo trace. It for the first time occurred to me that we must be in the rear of the Indians attacking our camp. I could perceive no way, from the difficulties of the ground, of joining our men, but by charging right through the Indian force. We paused for a moment to consult.

"Make as much noise as you can, and charge right through!" said Old Hicks, promptly.

This was my own idea; but I looked around, inquiringly, into the Frenchwoman's face. She answered my look with a gay smile, and lifted her pistol in the attitude of firing, to show me that she knew how to use it.

This pantomime was sufficiently significant; and, with Old Hicks and myself in front, we started at a rapid pace up the hill.

When we reached the level of the valley, we saw that the whole force of the Indians was rushing headlong upon our men, with the

wildest gestures of fury and the most terrific howlings, while they were evidently giving back, with all the indications of wavering and panic. There was not a moment for deliberation. Old Hicks and myself rushed on, making the ugliest noises we knew how, and firing our guns at the same time. Of course, the Frenchwoman was close with us.

When the savages, who were astounded by this unexpected attack, wheeled, to rush out of the narrow place in which they found themselves surrounded, they came right upon us. We had no choice but to stand firm or be ridden down. The former, of course, we preferred, if it would make any difference in our fate.

However, they swept by us in too great a hurry to do us any harm; and we thought that we were now safe, surely. The men gave us a hearty cheer as we joined them; but there was little time for an exchange of congratulations. The Indians had perceived the woman as they went past, and the sight seemed to inspire them with a new fury.

They had paused for a moment apparently to consult, and then came charging back, under the lead of a young chief, who had made himself conspicuous by his eager gesticulations. We retreated against the bluff, and, with our backs to it, awaited their approach with the calmness of despair.

The young chief led them on like a madman; and when, in an unbroken line, we presented our rifles to their approach, they did not, as usual, swerve or dodge, but came right up. We delivered a deadly fire among them; but, without noticing it, the young chief sprung from his horse into our midst, and, before we could think, had seized the Frenchwoman, and was dragging her off by the hair. He was a handsome-looking devil, with a wild, ferocious air.

We had just discharged every loaded weapon we had in the camp, and they had us entirely at their mercy. But it seemed to

be the sole object of the young chief to carry off the woman, and they commenced retreating so soon as he had her in his grasp.

I felt as if I could die a thousand deaths rather than submit to this, and, shouting to the men to follow, rushed after him with clubbed gun. Sitting firmly in the saddle, he had dragged the woman after him some twenty paces by the hair, at the side of his horse. She had not made the slightest noise, or even apparent effort to relieve herself, when, all at once, the horse of the chieftain reared, plunged forward, and fell dead upon its side. The chief was caught underneath its weight by his leg. The woman pitched over the fallen horse upon him, and, raising the bloody knife with which she had just stabbed the animal, plunged it into his breast before I could reach her.

We cheered this gallant feat, and rushed upon the retreating mob with such furious energy and effect, that they did not even stay to recover the body of their slain chieftain, but continued their retreat at full speed.

This was a most fortunate turn for us, with all our weapons unloaded as they were. The chief had thrown his arms around her with a death grip. I tore away their rigid grasp, and released her.

She arose with compressed lips, and her eyes emitting flashes of fierce light. Her ashy face was almost awful in its stern beauty, and she stamped with her small foot on the dead warrior's face with an unutterable expression of loathing and scorn. Then, bursting into tears, she sank at my feet, sobbing like a child.

I lifted her tenderly, while the men, who seemed to be entirely possessed with admiration for her, prepared a rude couch of blankets, with a saddle for a pillow, upon which I laid her sinking form. She had been overtaken, poor creature! such scenes of harsh and dreadful collision were enough to have outworn the sternest and strongest man. What wonder, then, that her delicate frame should sink. Even I felt such a sense of exhaustion coming over

me, that, had the Indians returned, I should almost have been disposed to give up without another struggle.

The incessant battling of the last few days, the fatigue of our late adventure, the wounds I had received, and which were now making themselves felt, all reacted upon me with such an overpowering sense of lassitude that I literally trembled with weakness. I had only time to perceive that the Indians were going off in earnest, and to say to Alexander, "Keep a sharp look out for us!" when I, too, sank down upon a blanket, and in an instant was sound asleep. Before I closed my eyes, I observed that Old Hicks, too, had curled up to sleep against the rocks.

CHAPTER XIII.

A STRANGE RECOGNITION.

WHEN I waked it was quite dark, and Teddy was busily engaged before a blazing fire in preparing a supper of antelope's flesh. The light and the savor of the roasting flesh, so grateful to my hungry senses, together, waked me from as profound a sleep as ever a wounded, weary, and starving man had indulged. As I looked around before rising, every thing seemed to be right. The horses were drawn up close outside of us in a circle, and, to my surprise, I saw the doctor looking somewhat pale, to be sure, but sitting up with the rest, and, as usual, joking with his rival, Teddy. The other wounded men were also up, and looking well.

I now remembered that, during the hurry of the fight, I had observed the doctor among the foremost in driving back the Indians, and that he had been particularly active and sympathetic in assisting the French woman.

I could not help a feeling of amazement at seeing them all look so quiet, and every thing so natural, after the strange and formidable incidents which had just occurred. The men were talking, and I listened for a while to what they were saying before I rose.

The doctor was the first speaker.

"You, Teddy, there ! you squinting brute, you'll burn up that antelope steak if you don't look out ; so then we'll have nothing nice to offer that she-spitfire when she wakes !"

"Never mind, my boy, she's a game crathur ; she didn't get skeered at the Camanches and come tearing into camp like a ghost

on horseback, at all abit, as yourself! but she'll have a convanient appe—whoo! you baste! take that!"

The doctor had thrown a large piece of meat at his head, which struck him on the mouth in the midst of his saucy speech, and Teddy had thrown it back, half rising to give greater impetus to the return compliment.

The doctor dodged it, and, amid shouts of laughter, the discomfited Teddy settled back to turning his steaks.

"Pah! you crazy divil, you might have known I wouldn't eat it raw; roast your wit next time before you send it, or maybe I'll be after roasting you."

"Stick to your trade, Teddy, my boy, and then you'll be respected! But I wonder where the cap'n picked up this cantankerous gal, any how."

"I guess he tuck her from the Injuns!" said one of the men.

"And I guess," said the doctor, "from the way she uses a knife, that they were glad to let her go; though that big Indian she killed didn't seem to be willing; either!"

"They had cotched a Tartar, and she wouldn't stay cotched; that's all of it!" said another.

"Them Injuns didn't do like any others I ever seed," said Gallagher. "They didn't mind our guns at all; and that chief was as ragin' about her as if she had been his sweetheart!"

"That's a fact," answered several.

"But our cap'n and Old Hicks must have had a h—l of a time of it last night, with the storm, and the mountain, and the Indians; you Jack, what are you doing there, staring at that sleeping woman so?"

I turned my head quickly, and perceived that this exclamation of the doctor's had very naturally been called out by the singular attitude of Landeville, who was sitting on a blanket near the sleeping woman's head. He had been wounded in the temple by a glancing arrow, and his long hair was matted with blood, which had dried upon his cheek; his face was very pale, and he was

bending toward her, with lips slightly parted and eyes almost starting from their sockets, with such intense and painful eagerness of gaze, that the sight was shocking. He seemed to be slowly perusing her features, one by one, and then, as if struggling with some dim memories, his lips would move slightly in inarticulate murmurs. He had not noticed the doctor's exclamation at all, and continued to gaze on in the same position, until I interrupted him by springing to my feet and touching him on the shoulder.

"What's the matter, Landeville? are you bewitched?"

The man turned up his eyes slowly to my face, with a look in which there appeared to be no recognition, and stammered out some vague answer in French, the purport of which I could not gather. One of the men, Dolphin Larry, who had been a sailor, and whom I had noticed as rather a brutal fellow, laughed out a loud, coarse laugh.

"Jack, you needn't take on so; you sha'n't have her all to yourself!"

Now I felt sure there was not another person present who was not entirely incapable of such a speech, and who was not shocked by the villainous idea hinted at; for all had been strongly impressed with the strangeness of Landeville's manner, and with the feeling that there was something in the character of his excitement altogether distinct from any gross associations. This I could perceive in an instant upon the faces of the men, as I glanced anxiously around to observe how this infernal hint would be received. Had it been otherwise, I felt that my course would have been the same, for I was most profoundly excited.

I turned deliberately toward the man, and, if my look expressed all I felt, it must have been hard and ugly enough. I half drew my belt pistol, and said, in a low voice, to the man, while I looked him in the eye,

"Another breath of such an insinuation, and I send a ball through your head, my fine fellow!"

"Two can play at that game!" said he, sulkily, and fingered his pistol, while he glanced uneasily around into the faces of the men to see if he could perceive any thing like sympathy there. The black looks he met thoroughly cowed him, for several of the men had already drawn their pistols, and, with flashing eyes fixed upon his movements, seemed prepared to second my course.

Had the fellow drawn his pistol, I am confident he would have been literally riddled with balls on the instant.

I think he felt this too, for his eyes dropped instantly, and he muttered,

"I didn't mean nothing wrong, cap'n! what's the use o' talking about shootin'?"

"Very well, my good fellow, and I don't mean to have any thing wrong meant!"

As I said this, I turned and walked toward the fire. "How are the steaks, Teddy?"

"Fine! fine, cap'n; all ready!"

Old Hicks had been roused from his deep sleep by the bustle, and now came forward to join us at the fire. Landeville, who appeared to be in a state of singular stupor, had, without appearing to have noticed any thing that took place, quietly withdrawn himself from his seat so close to the sleeping woman, and, throwing himself down just outside the circle of our fire-light, covered his head with his blanket, and seemed to be sleeping.

I did not choose to disturb him now with questions, but felt satisfied, from what I had observed of the man's character and knew of his history, that there must be some full and sufficient reason for this extraordinary excitement on his part entirely distinct from the fever of a slight wound.

It will be remembered that, in an earlier chapter, we spoke of the man's history as involved in something of obscurity, and as having some points of romantic interest and attraction about it.

The short sketch we then gave of him had been taken solely

from his own lips; and whether he really told the truth, knew nothing more, or had concealed part of what he did know, I had often thought of with curiosity.

The men most frequently called him Jack, and when his other name was spoken by them, they had it Landwell. He called himself Landeville; but I had always, something at random, it must be confessed, conceived, upon the supposition of the truth of his own story, that his real name must be something like Jacques L'Entville.

Certainly there was no great affinity between the three names; but, as he had talked vaguely about his belief that he was descended from some noble family of old French *regime*, and still treasured about his person a Catholic relic of great value, I had supposed that this rendering of the name was more euphonious, and in better keeping with the rare taste of the order from which he claimed descent.

Be this as it may, there was enough in it all to have arrested my attention, and direct it toward the action of the man with a good deal of sharp scrutiny. Though totally uneducated, except so far as a rough and wild experience of Indian and border life, assisted by an extremely sharp-sighted natural intelligence, could go, yet there was in his carriage a degree of elegance, and, in the tone of his intercourse with those around him, a something of reserve, almost amounting to *hauteur*, which I had often observed.

With the exception of myself, Old Hicks was the only person toward whom he had seemed disposed to unbend himself much. They had been fast comrades before through many scenes of remote and hazardous adventure, and would often sit apart for hours talking over the past. Sometimes I had taken the liberty to approach them as a listener; and though Landeville had at first ruffled somewhat, and shown a disposition to treat me as an intruder, by falling back on his reserve, yet, as he soon saw that Old Hicks and myself were quite cronies, and that I was influenced

simply by a love of narrative adventure, he thawed toward me entirely, and many a pleasant hour I spent in listening to him. Old Hicks was not much of a talker, and he was a singularly graphic and voluble story-teller. When excited, his gestures were not so vehement as those of the common Frenchman, though they were quite sufficiently so, and, I observed, were strikingly graceful. Next to Old Hicks, he and the eccentric doctor had always been my favorites.

As we were discussing with a keenly appreciative gusto the savory steaks of Teddy, all these recollections of what I had observed of the man, with many others, came back to me in review. The incidents of the evening had strongly impressed me.

Who was this Landeville, in reality? and what could be the meaning of the excitement which had possessed him at the sight of the French woman? Was it the instinct of nationality—the surprise of having so suddenly met a countrywoman amid such scenes sufficient to account for such emotion? Might it not have been something like this, united with the fever of his wound and the shock of such incessant battling, which had unsettled his brain? But then the men show, by their silence and looks, that they, too, have felt that there was something behind it all, more than can be readily accounted for by any such obvious reasoning. They, like myself, are evidently impressed that there must be a mystery of greater than common interest involved here, and are plainly occupied with surmises and curious conjectures.

Though Landeville had never been particularly popular with them, on account of his reserve, yet I had observed that he was generally looked up to by them with respect as well as curiosity.

The reckless gayety of the camp fire had disappeared, and the men, if they talked at all, spoke only in subdued whispers; and many an eager, furtive glance was thrown toward the sleeping woman, or to the dark, motionless form of Landeville.

Dolphin Larry had withdrawn sullenly apart, and no one seemed

to notice him but his brother, "honest Jim Larry," as he was called, who seemed to be deeply hurt at the disgrace which had befallen him.

Dolphin had not appeared to me to be naturally a bad fellow ; but, from various traits of a brutal and coarse impulsiveness which had come under my observation during our journey, my originally good opinion of him had greatly declined ; and though he was quite popular among us at first, from his garrulous propensities and absurd romancing about scenes he had witnessed, or, at least, pretended to have witnessed at sea, yet, from a number of things which had, from seeming incaution, dropped from him, I had been disposed, in common with others, to believe that his sea-faring life had neither been confined to a voyage to Havre, nor his experience to the inoffensive association of a merchant's vessel. I had even heard it hinted openly that some of the bloody stories he told at first as at second hand, he had, in a forgetful mood, come out with afterward as in the first person. This I should only have set down to the recklessness of the habitual romancer, but that I had perceived in him occasional traits, somewhat accidentally developed, which went to show that his associations had been most ruffianly, or, at least, vitiated in a greater degree than even the rude license of the sailor's common life would seem to account for.

Suspicious of the man and his purposes, or impulses rather, had gradually and almost unconsciously gathered in my mind, and I now determined to watch him closely. The reception his ruffianly and piratical suggestion had met with from the men pleased me, and I felt far more secure in their trustworthiness now than ever.

I pitied his brother Jim, who was as good, honest-hearted, thoroughly-metalead a hunter as ever drew trigger ; but I could only be quiet, and let matters take their legitimate course. I could do nothing to alleviate the bitter sorrow which I saw weighed him down, for he was sitting silently, with his forehead leaning on his hand, which covered his eyes.

Old Hicks, although he had witnessed nothing of the scenes which had called forth all these emotions; yet, to my surprise, seemed to be so entirely abstracted as not to have noticed that there was any thing unusual in the bearing or appearance of those around the fire. Indeed, the coming of the woman into our midst seemed to have thrown us all into unusual moods, and to have filled many with dreamy and pleasant memories.

I could readily imagine, from the old man's look, that his heart was away to that humble home he had left on the Trinity, and that the image of little Molly, and of many another gentle face that had smiled upon his rough path, had come to him this night, called up, perhaps, from under the dim, far haze of years, to meet the fresh presence of this fair woman with familiar greetings.

I am sure that, as every thing became quiet—when man after man sunk away to repose—there came up to me, from all the by-ways and highways of my life, those faces of the loved and beautiful which had been living, beaming sprites of joy—imbodied happinesses, with live eyes, and smiles irradiant of hope and heaven. They seemed to appear, not as intruders, but to welcome and sanctify the coming of this new visitor by their presence.

It is not much to be wondered at, then, that I imagined the old man, and others of the men, to be haunted by something like these angelic visitants. No doubt my own active fancy did much for many of the others, though I suppose that such association could hardly fail to summon to the desolate places such memories; for I have a superstition that every woman's face which has so looked upon us out of beauty, out of sympathy, or love, that it is remembered, becomes to our lives, from that time, a good angel, which comes to us again, as an entity, all living and loving as we saw it then, whenever marked occasions occur. They watch above us all, and descend to stir the Bethesda of our memories; and it is ever our own fault when the agitation of that pool brings not with it healing to each sinning leper.

The men had now all sunk away to sleep. Even Old Hicks had followed the rest, and I had for some time been the only person of the party who was awake ; for the men were, in the first place, too cruelly fatigued, and, in the next, there was absolutely no danger of a night surprise from the Indians, now they had been driven off, unless you may suppose the leopard to change its spots ; and I had not felt it necessary to place sentinels at all now, as I should had the attack been still impending. Then I should have done it merely for form sake, for I have so seldom known them to make a night attack except for a stampede, that it almost seemed ridiculous to be guarding particularly against one.

I had, therefore, permitted the men to go to sleep, and should have done so myself, but that I felt no inclination to sleep at all.

I sat for an hour, still dreaming over the fire listlessly, before I perceived the slightest indication of returning consciousness on the part of the silent sleepers.

The French woman, who lay not far from where I sat, now turned, and moved restlessly. I turned to observe her.

She muttered a few words which I could not understand, but then I heard a *name* distinctly pronounced, which caused me to shudder with a curiously mingled sense of interest and half-defined jealousy.

In another moment she arose, and looked wildly around her, seeming to be greatly puzzled to identify her position amid its strange surroundings.

When her eye fell upon me, she smiled with a feeble and haggard sort of a smile, and came forward to the fire.

“Have you any thing to eat, *grand capitaine*, for I am dying of hunger ?”

“O yes ! our cook, Teddy, has provided for you in his way ; you are too hungry to be fastidious of camp fare, I suppose ?”

“Think of my living with those filthy Camanches for a week, and talk of fastidiousness,” said she, as she seized the steak I prof-

ferred on the point of the stick on which it had been roasted. I looked away, for I felt that a woman, particularly a French woman, dislikes nothing so much as to have a man see her feeding when she is very hungry. It somehow levels the sexes too much, and impinges upon the poetry of our intercourse.

The length of time that she was silent sufficiently attested the eagerness of her appetite, and I had relapsed again into a brooding mood before she spoke.

When she did, it was with something less of badinage in her tone than I had yet heard.

"How came you, with these few men, out in this wild country, *capitaine*? I should think there must be strong reasons to induce men to risk so much!"

"You forget that I have even greater reason for asking you the same question! If I came here with a *few* men, how came you here *alone*?"

"Providence, *grand capitaine*, Providence brought me here; he who threw me in your way; and, as I am a host in myself, and you certainly needed re-enforcements, the dispensation in your behalf is now fulfilled."

I at once perceived that she had taken the non-committal sense of my first remark for earnest, and that she was not disposed to answer frankly to my replies.

I ought to have remembered that she was more sick and weary than I, and that the courtesies of such a time certainly did not call for any extra euphemisms on my part. I answered, somewhat stupidly,

"Certainly, you are a host!" and then, recollecting myself, "at least, I hope, are to be a hostess, from whom we expect a great deal of comfort, interest, and joy, to our isolated life! We came out here in search of a gold mine, which we understood to be in existence somewhere in this Camanche country. Have you ever heard of it?"

“O yes! Albert and I have frequently spoken of it, and he has for a long time intended to go to it.”

Who the d—l is this Albert at once flashed across my mind, already half fired with jealousy. I did not answer her very promptly; at last I said,

“Surely you do not live out in this wild country?”

“Yes, we did before the accursed Camanches broke up our pleasant home!”

“Home! a home out here, and you in it! What does this mean?”

“Why, it means that Albert and myself chose to come and live among the Camanches, and did so as long as we could!”

“Pleasant life this must have been, surely, for you; if I might venture to conjecture, you are not much over a year from Paris?”

“O, you Yankees are very good at guessing; but, voyage and all, it is now over two years since we left dear Paris!”

“You still regret Paris, then?”

“What French woman, with a heart in her bosom, ever ceased to regret Paris!”

“Then it seems you brought your heart along with—Who is this person Albert, of whom you speak so often, by-the-by?”

I asked this question with a most spasmodic effort at indifference and unconcern. She saw through the lame maneuver, laughed heartily, and, as she clapped her hands together, said,

“Jealous already, my *capitaine*! I think I shall not gratify your curiosity just now; I must enjoy your sufferings for a while first!”

I gathered from the tone of this speech something of consolation, and instantly replied,

“Ah! cruel virago, why must you torture one who is so much your slave!”

“We shall see, we shall see, *Monsieur Capitaine*, before long, how obedient you will be!”

"In a word, will you tell me what we can do for you? that much of your confidence you surely can favor me with."

The expression of her face changed at once; she rose, and came near to me. As she knelt by my side, she placed her hand upon mine, and looked with her large, dark eyes, brimming with emotion, steadily into my face.

"Yes, good *capitaine*, I will tell you what you can do for me; but, first, you must forgive me for having been very saucy!"

I smiled slightly, and nodded my head; she proceeded:

"You have rescued me, good *capitaine*; but then there is another prisoner among those vile Camanches, and I will guide you to their village, and to his rescue!"

"O, that infernal Albert!" thought I, with an involuntary twitch, as I looked into her imploring eyes; I felt, however, that I had met with a despot, whose commands I was bound to obey, though it seemed to me now that it was a very natural qualm of prudence which caused me to ask,

"Why, would you have our small party attack a whole village?"

"Ah, my jealous *capitaine*, you were not afraid of a whole camp when you rescued me, and there was as many warriors in it as it is probable there will be in this village, if we choose our time well!"

"You are a saucy minx!" said I, smiling. "Well, well, we will talk more about it in the morning!"

"That's a dear *capitaine*! but don't you want to know who the prisoner is?" said she, with a roguish look of inquiry.

"O, never mind," said I, with a desperate effort at appearing cool and careless; "it is some one you feel an interest in, and that is sufficient for me. I will see to-morrow what the men are willing to do, and then you shall tell us all about distance, place, and so forth."

She laughed gayly, and was in the act of replying with raillery, when, at a sudden exclamation on her part, I looked up, and there stood Landeville full in front of her, the light of the sinking fire

flickering over his ghastly features, while his dark eyes shone upon her with a strange, unnatural blaze.

There was the same startling eagerness of inquiry in his look that I had before observed.

She drew back from him with an expression and a gesture of terror.

“Who is this man, or is it a ghost? What does he want of me?”

“It is a countryman of yours, mademoiselle; he has been wounded to-day, and is probably unwell—feverish. Are you sick, Landeville, my good fellow? or what is the matter with you?”

He was now stooping over the shrinking woman, and peering with that strange look into her face. My voice, which had been considerably raised with the last words, seemed to arouse him somewhat, and, turning toward me with an absent look, in which busy memories seemed to be at work, he muttered,

“How came those features here?” Then, with startling abruptness, he seized the woman’s hand, and exclaimed,

“*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!* Who is this woman? How came she here? That face! that face!”

It seemed to be now the woman’s turn to be fascinated, for her eyes clung to his face with a long and steady gaze, and then she dropped them as if communing with herself and the dark, faded past; she had turned very pale too, and now that their faces were so near together, and wearing precisely the same expression, a strong resemblance between the cast of their features at once flashed across my mind. It was clearly perceivable even by the faint light.

I watched the scene now with a deep thrill of eager curiosity. The woman drew her hand across her brow, as if puzzled and confused in the effort to recall some remote image or event. The gesture had in it a nameless something, which recalled a movement of Landeville in the early part of the night.

He still watched her in absorbed quiet, and she again looked up into his face with an expression of some impatience, and shook her head slowly and doubtfully, as if in answer to the inquiry of his gaze. He dropped her hand, and while his white lips quivered with emotion and his eyes rolled wildly, he fumbled in the bosom of his hunting shirt, and slowly drew out the precious relic which I have mentioned that he wore about his neck. He tore off the greasy buckskin covering, and held the glittering crucifix pendant before her face.

"Do you know that?" he asked, in a husky voice.

Her eyes dilated in an instant, and verily shot fire, as, with a sharp cry, she sprang forward to seize it.

"That was my mother's! where did you obtain it, man?" She stooped hurriedly near the fire to examine it.

"My mother's! my mother's! yes! yes, it must be!" she muttered, quickly, as she turned it in her hand. "Yes, here are the initials, E. L. E." Then springing to her feet, she clutched his arm, and exclaimed vehemently, as she shook him with all her strength, while her eyes glared with fury,

"Wretch! how came such as you with this? Did you rob my mother's grave, monster?"

Landeville staggered back as if he had been shot, his whole frame shivering with agony as he groaned out,

"Rob your mother's grave? *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" and he clasped his hand before his eyes, and seemed to be falling.

I sprang to his assistance, but he shook me furiously off, and with one of those sudden transitions peculiar to his nation, while his face assumed an expression of diabolical passion, he hissed out between his teeth, with that characteristic rolling of the *r*,

"*Sac-r-r-e!* no! woman! fool! what do you mean? Rob my mother's grave! I never saw it; this is all I have to remember her by."

"Your mother?" gasped the woman, springing forward toward

him again with pale and parted lips; "your mother? what was her name? or is your name Jacques L'Entville?"

"Yes," said he, gloomily, drooping his head.

"My poor lost brother!" and she sprang into his arms.

This was an *eclaircissement* for which I was not entirely prepared, although a vague presentiment of something not unlike it had possessed me since I first had my attention called to the strange and unaccountable bearing of such a man as I knew Landeville, or L'Entville, as it now appeared, to be. I witnessed it, of course, with strong emotion; for the idea was in itself sufficiently touching, that of a long-lost brother meeting with a sister amid such scenes and associations, and apparently after having passed through their lives surrounded by circumstances so dissimilar.

To me there existed already no shadow of a doubt of the relationship, however strange the after facts and explanations might appear. The immediate effect of her presence upon L'Entville, the bewildering struggle he had passed through while questioning the past concerning her face, the identical effect produced by his presence upon her, the crucifix and image, the distinct likeness, altogether afforded to me confirmation "strong as proof of holy writ," that a brother and a sister were now folded in perhaps a first embrace since childhood.

"Jacques! poor Jacques! who gave you that cross, which I thought had been buried in the grave of my mother?"

"The squaw of the accursed Cherokee gave it me when I was about twelve years old, telling me that it had belonged to my mother; but she charged me to guard it sacredly from the sight of her husband, for she said he would take my life and hers if he saw it, since he supposed it to be lost."

"You were old enough to remember when he bore you off; you did not let him die a natural death, Jacques?" said she, pushing him back from her embrace, and looking with reproachful inquiry into his face, while she held him at arm's length.

"*Sacre!* no: I brained him with a tomahawk at twenty, and fled. He will never separate mother and children again in this world. But, my sister, how came you here? I remember much of splendor and gold as associated with that remote time, when we played together beneath the big trees, and amid the flowers and the springing waters."

The picturesque language of this man had often attracted my attention. The French woman bowed her face, which she covered with both of her hands, and shook for a moment as in an agony, and then looking up, she said, in a low voice,

"It is too long a tale to tell now; you shall know it all some day. In the mean time, blessed be the Holy Virgin, my brother, that we have met! You sadly frightened me, at first, with your strange looks and stranger manners. Ours has been a curiously varied life enough; a wild, strange fate, and a wilder, stranger meeting." As she said this, her head sunk upon his shoulder again meekly, and I felt that in such a scene, I, as a third party, could only be regarded as an intruder, and so, as quietly as possible, withdrew to my blanket and saddle pillow, leaving them to an unrestrained intercourse. I felt curious enough, God knows, to understand the true merits of this unusual affair; but I felt, quite as well, that they had a right to claim the opportunity of mutual explanation without the impertinent intrusion of a third, and, apparently, uninterested person, into their secrets and councils.

I accordingly withdrew, and left them to restore the unities between themselves. Interested as I was, I could not long listen to the monotone of their low voices—the meaning of scarcely a word of which I could distinguish, as they now spoke in French—without gradually sinking off into first drowsiness, and then into a profound sleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

PRISONERS, ALL HANDS.

WHEN I awoke it was morning, and the yellow sun was in my eyes. It must have been the sound of the unusual bustle that awakened me. When I attempted to stretch my limbs before opening my eyes, I found there was some restraint upon them. Now my eyes flew open quickly and widely enough. I looked about me, and saw myself surrounded by a crowd of swarthy and half-naked figures. The leggins and breech-clouts first met my astonished eyes; then the white shield of buffalo hide, the feather-tufted lances, the bows, the quivers, the long hair, and the feather crowns.

There was little noise—indeed, no sound, the meaning of which I could comprehend. I only saw that I was a captive, and had the consolation of supposing that, of course, my whole party had been taken quite as helplessly as I had been. I was so unwilling to permit myself to realize this, that I was about to shout, in the hope of rallying my men again to the rescue, when a hand, a soft hand, was laid across my mouth, and a clear, English voice said to me,

“Be quiet! quiet, *capitaine!* we are not all as much enemies as you suppose. Go with us, and you will find all right; do, *grand capitaine!*”

The voice of the speaker changed so entirely with the last sentence that I was utterly astounded.

“Trust me, trust me, *grand capitaine*, and all will be right.”

There was no time for protest, and in a few seconds I found myself lifted from the earth, and borne between two men on horseback, while my eyes were blindfolded.

There seemed to me to be the trampling of a great company on horseback before and behind as I was borne swiftly along. Whether it was composed of any others than the Indians, of whom I had obtained a momentary sight before being blindfolded, it was impossible for me to conjecture. My estimate of their number was equally vague : I could only judge that it must be great by the tumult and the rush of sound about me. This sound was not that of voices, but of the feet of horses, the grinding of shields, and the occasional striking of lances, bows, and quivers together, with the constant slapping of the broad girt lash, which all indicated to my ear the confused and hurried movement of a large body of warriors, while the sharpness of the wind cutting my cheek, apart from the easy, steady motion with which I was borne, sufficiently proved the swiftness of our progress.

For a long time I heard no voice except an occasional guttural grunt ; and, shut out as I was from all vision, with only these dull, monotonous sounds about me, how vividly my brain acted through the roused and startled passions !

Weak and besotted fool that I had been to permit myself to be beguiled by interest in this vagabond French witch into forgetting my duty as the officer of the expedition, responsible not alone to the country for their lives, but as well to the men themselves, who have been induced to venture with me by my own representations ! Ah ! how I chafed inwardly, and raged through my set teeth, when the thought flashed across me that perhaps, after all, this woman had entrapped us designedly.

She has confessed that she and that wretch Albert she is so fond of talking of have been living among the Camanches for some years ; perhaps they are confederates now of these greasy fellows ; and may be *monsieur* and *madame* may have some prospective

interest in the gold mountain, and she may have conveyed to him in some way a hint of my presence and purposes, and this is the reward I get for all my chivalry and admiration! Fire and vengeance! can it be so? Curse all women in general, and a thousand curses upon all French women in particular! the impudent, hard-faced slut! to so gammon me with her brazen airs and saucy gibberish! But there is some consolation; she made a fool of Old Hicks, and of Landeville, and of every body, indeed! Fury! I! redoubtable captain of the Trinity Rangers! made a ninny of in the first place, then captured, tied, blindfolded, and carried off, the devil knows where! by a sharp-eyed drab of a French woman! If I ever get out of this scrape, I vow to cut off my hair and beard, and enter a convent for the rest of my life! They wouldn't have me in a monastery; the monks would set me to washing dishes! How are the mighty fallen! To what base uses do we come at last!

I groaned, writhed, chafed, and swore deep down in my throat, but it was all of no avail. My relentless ravishers rushed on as if they fled from some pursuing storm. I heard no sound with which I was familiar; and to those that did come, my ears became gradually accustomed: the confusion of rattle, clatter, and tramp subsiding soon, as does the mingled roar of cataracts, into a sort of silence, which leaves the stunned senses time to gather themselves together for self-communion.

Now I began to perceive how unmanly all my first views of the causes of this most extraordinary predicament had been. I had raved like a querulous child during the tumult of brain and sense, which had been very naturally consequent upon being awoke suddenly out of a sound sleep by such a surprise, and being carried off with such unceremonious rapidity a bound prisoner, with the pleasant summary of comforts left me, that my men had all deserted me, were sharing my fate, or that I had been betrayed in another quarter, and, at any rate, that I was disgraced!

But, as I regained my self-possession, I commenced to relink the chain of circumstances, and, through a medium of less obscurity, saw the conduct of the French woman, and her agency in what had occurred, more fairly.

There could certainly be no doubt of her having been a prisoner of the Camanches when Hicks and myself aided her escape ; her lancing that Indian warrior would hardly pass for acting, even supposing she knew us to be concealed where we were, which would hardly pass muster among the probabilities. Even if this might, her stabbing the young chief in the fight at the camp did not look much like collusion ; then her stamping his face with her heel, with that magnificent look of loathing and hate, certainly showed her to be a fine actress, and, as certainly, him a great actor. He must have been " death on tragedy," sure ; for we rolled his lifeless corpse, along with that of his horse, over the steep bank into the swift river. Then the fainting scenes were most capital ; and, above all, that with our old and tried comrade, Landeville, was a superb triumph of the histrionic art, that was, indeed, thrown away upon so slim an audience. Indeed, considering the extent of the stage over which the actors had to pass, the immense combinations necessary to produce the unities of time and place, this might safely be pronounced unparalleled acting on the whole, to say nothing of the convincing naturalness and most audacious frankness which had characterized every look and gesture of hers.

When this delicious memory came over me, I felt like biting my lips through for very shame and self-loathing, that I had permitted myself for an instant, under any possible circumstances, to doubt that presence of the soul of truth—not to mention tenderness !—which I had felt in her face from my first view of it !

But, then, there were some most inexplicable circumstances attending all this. I had left Landeville and her still awake and talking when I sunk off to sleep. When I again awoke, it was to find myself tied and surrounded by Indian warriors, while I could

hear nothing from my men. What *could* this mean? It was *her* hand that was laid across my mouth; it was her voice, with even something of the usual levity which had so much astonished me in it toward the last, that had soothingly urged me to be still, and trust to finding all right soon! She, then, was not a prisoner! What could it mean?

The same impulse which led me to obey and trust her at that time, without knowing why, now moved me to renewed confidence, since I had fully thought over every thing, and reviewed all the circumstances. I felt a sure conviction that I might rely upon her faith, honor, and gratitude, mysterious as the present circumstances were, and great as might be the difficulty of seeing my way through them.

I could not but believe that, though she might now be free, and even riding by my side—of which I had no sort of evidence worth any thing—and had done nothing apparent for our rescue, yet, when the time came, she would act at any risk.

It was possible that, though these savages might know and respect her person, still she had not, at present, any power over them; but that she believed the opportunity would soon occur when she would be able, at least, to prevent any very serious mischief from coming to us, I had too great confidence in her honor and affection to doubt.

I had looked into her clear eye with too much earnestness, and felt too surely the frank, though willful daring of her spirit, to permit, for a sober moment, the shadow of a suspicion of the truth of the words she had spoken when I awoke.

She desert her long-lost and new-found brother! She betray Old Hicks and myself, who had rescued her at so great peril from enemies she evidently feared, and hated with a deadly fear and hate! I had as soon suspected my own soul of being capable of perjury!

To feel so required strong faith enough, under such circum-

stances, it must be confessed ; but I did feel so, and with a strength of faith which it would have required a great deal more than had yet occurred to weaken, or even shake.

It will probably be suspected that there was a touch of tender sentimentality in all this on my part ; but perhaps both men and women are to be found who are capable of a noble confidence and trust, without the intervention of a purely animal passion.

Certainly a ranger captain is not naturally to be suspected of indulging in platronics ; and if I had done so, yet it was utterly "unaware !" I judge that women and soldiers are pretty nearly classed alike in the court of Dan Cupid ; they both bear his arrows for a long time unconsciously, feeling the rankle without knowing the cause !

I had leisure enough to chew the cud of sweet and bitter fancy during the several hours of rapid travel which passed, before there was the slightest variation in the mode of our progress to be felt. It had, as yet, been over an apparently dead level, the horses moving as evenly as the cars on a rail-way. I had not been so much confounded as to feel any sort of doubt as to the direction taken, and which had been heretofore preserved. We had been following the course of the Peaceful Valley and the river on which our camp lay ; but now some great change seemed to have occurred, both in the character of the ground passed over, and in the direction held. The band halted suddenly, and then moved on, square to the left, in a slow walk, down what seemed quite a long, steep descent. There was a great rush of the crowding and jostling horsemen, and soon I heard ahead the splashing of water.

I knew we were now entering the valley stream. Here, then, was a pause of some ten minutes, to refresh the horses and riders in the water. A water-gourd was held to my lips by some invisible hand, and I took from it a long, eager draught.

While in the water, the two savages who carried me managed, whether purposely or not, to turn their horses around several times.

I suspected at once the meaning of this maneuver, and strove hard to follow their movements with steady calculation, so as to know whether they turned back into the valley, or continued across the river. In this they contrived to baffle me most effectually; for, instead of turning their horses around by a single evolution, which would have enabled me to keep along with them easily, they would rear their animals and make them plunge, but turning them while on the pivot of the hind feet. This they continued to do, now this side, and now on that, until, although I knew they were doing it to confuse me, and that they were turning about and about, it was utterly impossible for my bewildered senses now to tell any thing of the direction. I saw they meant to leave me in doubt as to whether they had descended to the river only to water or to cross.

This was, to say the least of it, a strange stratagem for Indians to practice toward prisoners upon whose lives they had any immediate design; but, though this both comforted and annoyed me somewhat, I did not forget to console myself with the belief that our French woman could have nothing to do with it.

They commenced to ascend the river bank again, but it was impossible for me to tell any thing of the ascent as compared with the descent: all that I could judge was that they were about equally steep.

Suddenly I felt the mass into which I was wedged in the ascent stop, and then a sort of shudder reached me, such as is always felt magnetically through a crowd on any sudden accession or transition of feeling. In another moment a distant war-whoop met my ear, and the whole body seemed to rush tumultuously forward up the bank.

What, another collision, Indian to Indian?

I found myself dragged along with the rest, and squeezed almost to death in the press. I made now the most desperate efforts to free my arms, but it was of no avail. A clear, shrill voice, which I felt sure I recognized—at least every fiber in my body did so with

a thrill—addressed my keepers in a strange language and tones of command, and they instantly invested my body with additional thongs and grappled me more closely. In the mean time, the struggle and rush upward seemed to become more furious, and the whooping and clamors ahead louder and more confused.

I heard again that shrill voice shouting in command, and then it was drowned in an angry roar of yells, whoopings, and most unearthly cries of rage from the front. The heavy crash of a collision instantly followed, and the press recoiled from above so heavily as almost to bear us to the earth. Such awful howlings of savage rage as now went up I never heard before.

The crowd seemed to reel and stagger as if under the press of an avalanche from above, which was crushing them within a narrow way from which there was no escape on either hand.

My hurried solution of this strange condition of things was, that we were in a deep buffalo trace, a cut, or gully, leading down to the water, and that the advance of our party had been attacked by other Indians—as I supposed they must be, since I heard no guns—just as they emerged upon the plain above, and were now being driven back into the river.

The jam was so great that there was no room to turn, and the warriors could only back their horses slowly as the immense pressure permitted. I felt that I was being crushed to death, and shouted with all the breath left in my body, in the hope that some of my men might hear me, and be encouraged to make an effort to free ourselves in the tumult; for, thought I, that treacherous Amazon has not, perhaps, secured them all quite so carefully as myself: some one may have a weapon left.

The guttural cries of rage and terror around me were sufficiently deafening, but still I imagined that I could distinguish several answering voices; and just now, when all seemed to be at the wildest of blinded, grinding, and suffocating horror, I heard faintly ahead the report of two pistols at short intervals. All was still in

an instant, and with a heart bounding with joy and hope—for I supposed it to be some one of our men who had freed himself—I made one other desperate effort to free myself.

At this moment a triumphant yell from ahead burst upon the stillness, which was caught up by those about me, and the mass, as by one elastic impulse, rebounded up the ascent, and I was borne along with the most furious rapidity, deafened by the exulting shouts.

I heard nothing more of the pistols, but in a short time felt that we had reached the level ground again, and the breeze which struck my face showed me that we were on the prairie.

It seemed as if the two warriors extricated themselves very quickly from the heavy rush of the current of the fight, which now appeared to have been so promptly changed from a flight on our part to a pursuit. They then slackened their pace, and, indeed, came to a full stop; while the hoarse and hideous clamors, mingled with the clashing of shields and grating of lances, which told of the furious fight, rolled on in the distance.

I could now hear small parties of two or three riders go slowly by, and it seemed to me that they stopped not far from us, but they all preserved a perfect silence.

I was so utterly stunned and confounded by all these inexplicable incidents—above all, sounds—that I did not even attempt to collect my thoughts, or to form an estimate of the meaning of any thing that had occurred. It was all a monstrous night-mare of rage, shame, and helplessness to me. I could only endure with bitter curses in my heart; for the warriors held me in vice-like clasps, and I had already sufficiently proven the futility of any further efforts at escape from them.

It was not many minutes before a burst of triumphant yells from the distant fight, which drowned all other sounds, was caught up by my two keepers, and echoed by those around, and then soon I could distinguish the thundering hoofs of the returning victors.

Such rejoicing victors ! such exulting screeches as I now heard, it seemed to me the very fiends of hell could never have sounded over a triumph.

But, though my keepers seemed to be quite as much maddened as the victors by excitement, yet they never for a moment relaxed their vigilant guard over, and hold upon, my person.

The main body now came sweeping around us, and for a while my ears ached with their hoarse and harsh vociferations ; then there came a solemn pause, during which I supposed that those bearing their slain came forward into the view of all, with the bodies. Then arose a wild, moaning screech, followed by a prolonged and plaintive howl.

All was silence now again, and for fifteen minutes no sound of voices was heard. This time I supposed to be occupied in the hasty secretion of the bodies from the desecrating search of their enemies, which always follows, if it be possible, a battle attended with loss.

Now I heard the galloping of a single rider approach the place where I stood.

That same shrill, peculiar voice, which I had before thought I recognized, and with such singular emotion, I heard pronounce a few rapid words in the same indescribable language, and then the horseman passed on.

One more wild burst of triumph, that surely most rudely tore "the cave where echo lies," and we were away again at the same headlong speed, my poor helpless carcass borne along as if it had constituted a part of the barbaric trappings of this savage horde.

I had long since given up attempting to conjecture concerning motives, causes, or any thing else, except as to when it would be time for me to be released from the infernal restraint of these leathern thongs that were cutting into my flesh, and from the still more excruciating position in which I was now swung by them between the horses of the two warriors, who each held in his hand, or tied

around his saddle-bow, the ends of the thongs which enveloped my body and limbs.

I swung between them about as comfortably as you might suppose a poor Jack tar would ride, who had been condemned, as a punishment, to suspend his hammock from the "crow's nest" on a stormy night.

But complaint, had it been altogether manly, would have been of no avail, and I only prayed that the minute might be hastened when I could be let down upon mother earth once more, if it were even to have my body riddled with a hundred arrows.

I was past swearing point, for I was suffering too much ; and sure I did not fail to remember the terrible ride of Mazeppa. I did not care now whether the French woman was a witch, a hell-cat, or any other worse thing, if it could be conceived. I was dying of pain and exhaustion, and that was enough.

Hour after hour went by, and still the inexorable savages drove on at the same unsparing gait. Greatly to my surprise, the ground still seemed to be nearly level, and now and then the dash of waters came to my ear ; but soon, had it been the sound of a cataract, I should not have heard it.

The intolerable agony that I had been enduring for several hours past, with a sort of numbed half consciousness, did its work at last, and I sunk into a state of swooning insensibility, which was at least a temporary relief.

I could not even conjecture how long this condition of things had lasted, or what further had occurred when I awoke, for it was to such astonishment, that, had I been translated to Australia or the moon in a twinkling, it could not possibly have been more profound.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RANCHO.

I OPENED my eyes upon a neatly-thatched roof of bulrushes over head, resting upon walls of picketing, plastered between the logs with mud and moss. Guns, a guitar, and trophies of the chase hung around them. The French woman sat at my feet, bathing them with cold water. At the sight of her the blood rushed warmly to my temples, and then back again as quickly, in the revulsion of rage, as I remembered how dreadfully I had suffered—been outraged and dishonored by her infamous duplicity. She wore a light, singular costume, compounded of the elegances of civilized with the grotesquery of savage taste. Her long, dark hair, unconfined, fell about her face, which was stooping over my bruised and swollen limbs.

My first incoherent thought—for I burned in a raging fever—was beautiful—no, accursed witch! you may well afford some sympathy to the wounds and suffering inflicted by your own treachery! I could, with great pleasure, tear out the devilish splendor of those eyes of yours.

With a gesture of fiery impatience, I attempted to withdraw my feet from her, and then to rise. She turned, threw back her hair, and gazed on me, as I fell back on my couch through weakness, with a sweet smile, illumined by surprise and joy, but which instantly changed as she saw, I suppose, and with quick intuition interpreted, the wild expression of rage upon my face.

She sprang forward, her eyes filled with tears, and, though I rudely attempted to fling her from me, gently seized my arm.

“*Capitaine!* good *capitaine!* you do me wrong! Hear me! hear me! I could not help it; it was the only way to save you; there was no time to explain; and, had you made your escape, they would have killed you all! Now do, good *capitaine!* believe me!”

And she laid her soft, cool hand soothingly upon my burning cheek. The touch was electrical. I felt the balm of its magnetism sweep along my nerves as if the wing of a spring zephyr brushed them, to the last unveiled fiber, with its coolness.

I had closed my eyes as I fell back, to shut out the hateful vision of her presence; now, when I slowly opened them again, she was bending, with her face close to mine, watching me, with suffused eyes.

“They are all safe, my dear, brave *capitaine!* My brother, the old man, and all are here! It was those stupid brutes of warriors that hurt you so. They did not understand! I was so hurried when those black liars, the Kewanies, attacked us at the river, in the trail. This is our home!”

She spoke with great eagerness; but when I smiled faintly, and asked, “But I thought the ‘accursed Camanches had broken up your pleasant home?’”

She smiled archly as she remembered her own words to me, thus literally quoted.

“Was not our pleasant home broken up, Mr. Skeptic, when Albert and I were separately surprised and carried off prisoners? But you see our little castle is safe; for our faithful tribes guarded it, and have brought me back to it. And here you are safe too, and shall soon be well!”

“Your faithful tribes!” I exclaimed, in astonishment. “What do you mean by *your* faithful tribes? Are you an Indian, as well as a French woman and a witch?”

“Yes!” said she, as she soothed my hot forehead gently with her hands; “yes, I am all this!”

Her look changed into an expression of abstraction, and she continued, in an altered voice,

“You will find, good *capitaine*, when you know more of me, that woman can live many lives, and fill bravely many places in this world where you would least expect to find her, and still be woman too. But you must not talk too much; your business now is to get well as fast as possible, and then you shall understand every thing. Say, good *capitaine*! you are not a poor daughter of Eve, to die of curiosity, are you?”

And, with a beaming smile, she rose and returned to her gentle labor in soothing my swollen limbs with the cold water. While thus engaged, she frequently turned to address me some pleasant word of gentle petulance, when I tossed to and fro in my feverish restlessness.

Her pleasantries—her unremitting attentions—the charm, perhaps, of her most singular and magnetic presence, all soon operated powerfully upon my senses, and I sunk again into a deep sleep.

It must have been a long time before I waked, and when I did, it was with the odor of roasting flesh saluting my hungry olfactories. I was ravenous; but the fever had passed off, and I could easily move my limbs. I looked round the room; there was no one in it but myself. The sun was just rising, and threw in his slant yellow rays through the square hole in the picketing which served for a window.

I attempted to rise again—cautiously this time, for the whole scene of yesterday recurred to me in full—and found that, thanks to the care of my skillful and kind nurse, I was able to walk, though a little stiffly at first.

I could distinguish the sound of a voice, which struck me as familiar; and, on looking round the room, I saw an opening which I supposed to be a door, across which was hung a matting of col-

ored grasses, ingeniously plaited. I ventured to raise it, and stepped into another and longer room, along the sides of which I counted all my men, stretched upon their blankets on the hard dirt floor, and sound asleep.

Old Hicks, who was nearest, soon lifted his head, for his alert ear had caught the sound of my footfall. He looked greatly the worse for use these few last days; but the stout old man was not at all bowed, and he said, heartily,

“You’re gittin’ over it, captain? glad of it! That gal was a take-in, after all; she’s got us safe enough here, with her cussed Camanches all round us, and our guns and knives gone!”

“May be it isn’t so bad as you think, old man.”

But the men were now all wide awake, and one after another sprang to their feet, and came to welcome me with characteristic expressions.

The hasty greetings upon this unexpected meeting being over, I perceived that the familiar voice, in pursuit of which I had started originally upon this exploration, yet sounded still further on.

Judging from what Old Hicks had said, and what had fallen in exclamations from the other men, it was nearly certain that we were treated as prisoners. I determined to push on in the direction of those sounds, which I felt sure of having recognized, and settle this question at once. Passing through this longer room, I came to another curtain of matting and doorway. I had motioned to the men to stay behind, and, before lifting the mat, heard the voice of the French woman too distinctly for any further doubt.

She was speaking in loud and rapid tones, and with a degree of sharpness, too, which caused me to pause a moment before pushing, unasked, into her presence.

The language she spoke was the same, I thought, I had heard her use as in command during the affair at the river—a succession of very peculiar guttural sounds, which any civilized tongue less nimble than hers would have found great difficulty in producing.

It was, of course, impossible for me to understand any thing that she said ; but I wished to hear the tone of the other voice before I made my appearance. As I listened attentively, it now first occurred to me that the modulations of her voice had changed greatly since I had first heard it faintly on waking ; and, indeed, as I remembered more carefully, I became convinced that she had then been talking in French, and had probably changed the language on hearing the bustle caused by my entrance among the men.

This looked like concealment again, and roused once more my suspicions.

Her companion answered at last in the deep, rich, measured tones of a strong and broad-chested man. The language was the same she spoke ; but its barbaric gutturals could not disguise the imperious European—the Frenchman ! Albert, perhaps ! thought I, with a sharp twinge.

There was another point upon which there was less possibility of my being mistaken in a moment or two, and that was, that they were engaged in an angry altercation ; for his voice soon lost its measured accent, and became harsh and rough, as the genius of the tongue spoken demanded, and now and then I could distinguish a French oath interpolated.

As the altercation proceeded, the man's voice seemed to rise in the expression of a most ungovernable fury, and I heard several times the stamp of a heavy foot.

My blood boiled at this, and I felt that sort of desperate savagery coming over me which only a hungry man can realize ; for I knew, from the voice of petulant remonstrance with which she spoke, that it was in intercession or explanation, and judged that it must be in our behalf.

What could this ruffian-like inhospitality mean ?

Was the brute angry because I had rescued one who, to say the least, seemed to hold some very near relation to him ?

I have suffered enough for that foolish chivalry, and now I'll

know the worst, and brave it too ! I clutched instinctively at my belt for my pistols, and muttered a bitter oath as I missed them ; then, with set teeth, and, I suppose, a very pale face, I suddenly threw up the matting, and stepped out confronting the speakers.

The face of the man who was speaking was contracted with a savage frown, which rendered his expression demoniacal. His black eyes shot fire from beneath broad, dark brows, above which the purple veins were knotted like snakes ; his arched nose was white across the bridge, while the thin nostrils spread like those of a panting charger ; the lower part of his face was covered with a black, heavy, and close-curved beard, and his thin, parted lips were stretched pale across large white teeth—altogether, with his tall, lithe, powerful frame, and his inconceivably fantastic costume, he presented the most striking *ensemble* of a wild savage chieftain crossed upon the European outlaw.

He was holding the woman by the arm while she replied to his fierce look with a steady gaze of calm, half-smiling self-reliance. He started slightly on my abrupt and probably singular appearance, and I perceived an involuntary movement of the hand toward his belt ; but a change, quick as an electrical shock, passed at once across his features. He dropped the arm he held, and, in advancing two steps toward me, the ferocious and unbridled ruffian was transformed into a gentleman, every “joint and motive” of whose body radiated courtesy.

He extended his hand with a low inclination of the head, which I could not help feeling had something of mockery in it.

“Happy to find you up again, and be able to welcome you to our home in the wilderness, my brave *capitaine* !”

I was trembling with anger.

“But, sir, is this your hospitality, that we are first betrayed, while risking every thing for this woman, then tied, dragged here like felons, deprived of our arms, and held as prisoners ? What does this mean ?”

He smiled, and bowed again with a most provoking suavity.

"You were not betrayed, my dear *capitaine*; your arms shall be restored to you as soon as possible; and if you will step with me now, I will undertake to show you the most persuasive reasons why you should at least *seem* to be *our* prisoners for a while."

He turned on his heel, making a slight gesture which invited me to follow. The woman stepped quickly to my side, and, taking my hand, looked coaxingly up into my face, and said, with an arch smile,

"Come, good *capitaine*, Albert will show you all my *reasons*!"

I followed passively.

This scene had occurred under a sort of arbor, thatched with boughs, and supported upon posts which ran outside the whole length of the two rooms through which I had passed. I now perceived that this house stood in the center of a yard or court, which was fenced in by a close picketing some ten feet in height, and that the only means of egress from this court was by climbing a number of steps formed by blocks of wood of different lengths, which led up to the top.

As we approached them, I saw the smoke of many fires rising beyond, and heard the increasing hum of unusual sounds. When we reached the top, a scene presented itself which, from its novel and startling character, will not very soon be forgotten by me.

We looked down into another inclosure of picketing larger than this first, and over which some four or five hundred Indian warriors were scattered in careless groups around their different fires.

I felt a cold shuddering at the sight.

The man turned and looked me in the face with a cold, singular smile of sneering triumph, and, raising his hand, said,

"There are our *reasons*, Mr. *Capitaine*! They are eloquent enough, are they not?"

"I do not precisely understand their eloquence yet," said I, bitterly. "Do you rule them, or they rule you?"

The man's brow darkened, and he said, sternly,

"I rule *them*, as you will find, but I must be permitted to do it in my own way."

"Since I am a prisoner, and disarmed, I have no power to teach you a better way."

He flashed his eye fiercely upon me, and said, in a low, angry voice,

"Sir *Capitaine*, you are a f—"

The woman quickly placed her hand upon his mouth, and stopped what was no doubt going to be a very uncivil speech, for the taunting sharpness of my manner had for the moment fairly stung him out of his propriety. He did not continue his speech, while I turned my face sullenly and continued my survey of the scene. I already hated and distrusted this man with a most hearty hatred, but felt that it would only increase the difficulties of my sufficiently unpleasant condition should I unnecessarily exasperate what I had seen enough to convince me was a ruthless and subtle temper.

The Indians were all engaged in cooking and eating, and a busy, curious scene it was. There were no tents, and buffalo robes were spread around each fire. Upon these the warriors were seated in a circle, while a squaw stooped over each fire, tending the meat, and passing great pieces of it, on the points of sharpened sticks which had served for spits, to their hungry and lazy masters.

Their bows, quivers, lances, quirts, shields, saddles, coils of lariats, medicine pouches, moccasins, and all the other rude paraphernalia of the camp, lay scattered in wild confusion over the ground.

The personal accouterments of the warriors were more complete, and approached more nearly the ideas of civilized comfort, and even taste, than I had ever before perceived among the Indians. They all wore leggins of dressed buckskin, which reached up to the thighs, and were connected by thongs to a neatly folded and tolerably white breech-clout of cotton cloth.

They wore upon the body a close shirt of buckskin, which was dressed of a dark brown color, not unlike that of their own cuticle, and the skirt of which reached nearly down to the top of the fringed leggins. This shirt was without sleeves, and they wore over it, and about the waist, a belt of the same material, plaited in a wide braid : in this they carried long sheath-knives.

Some of them still wore their quivers, which were suspended to the back by a belt of the same make, which passed over the left shoulder and the bust, meeting the waist-belt.

In nearly every group of forty or fifty there was one who wore for distinction a half circle of hawk or eagle feathers, which stood up erect from the brow ; then here and there I could perceive two or three prominent figures, upon the heads of which these half circles were extended into crowns of large feathers from the eagle's wings, to which were attached the quaint addenda of tails, composed of bunches of the feathers of birds of gaudy colors and different sizes, placed at intervals of several inches along a string of over two feet in length, at the end of which was a broad blossom of flaming feathers.

As the half circles seemed to mark inferior dignitaries, the feather crowns with their long tails appeared to mark the chief of a tribe or a section of a tribe.

At least, they were evidently important personages, for a cluster of followers was gathered round each, and the meat which was passed to them was handed on by several obsequious hands, from those of the presiding squaw, which seemed emulous enough to hasten its progress to those honored lips.

The uniformity of equipment, and the faint approach it made to that of civilized warriors, first arrested my attention, and excited my astonishment. They were altogether unlike any Indians I had ever seen in the South, both in costume, and the comparative orderly quiet and discipline which seemed to prevail.

The great gate of this yard was thrown wide open, and through

it I could see down into the green valley beyond, which was covered with the horses of the warriors turned loose to graze. The picket guard rode slowly back and forth around them, keeping them together, and ready, on the first alarm of the approach of an enemy, to drive them through the gate into the shelter of the yard.

Throwing a hurried glance around upon the scenery, I perceived that the Frenchman's rancho occupied a very picturesque position across the mouth of a gorge, formed by the near approach of two chains of mountainous hills. Although their beetling brows almost met a little in the rear of the rancho, yet, like the lines of an acute angle, their courses gradually diverged until in full view, and, widening as far as the eye could reach, there opened between them one of the loveliest valleys poet ever dreamed of. To the right of the rancho, and partly running through the inclosure of the picketing, coursed a narrow, but bright and rapid stream, which seemed to take the impulse of its descent from the joy of escaping the dark shadows of the gorge behind.

The sides of the mountains, which were very steep, were clothed to their summits with dense clusters of evergreens, while along their feet were scattered some noble live oaks, several of which stood within the inclosures, and one, the most majestic of them all, spread its great arms, as if in patriarchal benediction, over the house, and swept the thatching with its beard.

A more striking landscape, or a more secure, and, at the same time, tastefully selected stronghold it would be difficult to imagine.

There was certainly enough in all I had seen from my memorable perch upon the top of those stiles to produce upon me a strong impression. The appearance of uniformity, order, and discipline which that large body of Indians before me exhibited ; the mingled wildness and beauty of the scenery ; the consummate science and taste exhibited in the selection of this as a position of defense against any number of enemies such as were unprovided with cannon ; the proud, fierce, and ruthless bearing of the strong man

who stood beside me, and whose imperious will, like the powerful spell of some weird necromancer, seemed to have called forth from the dead vast and waste of silence this extraordinary scene but to hold it in being and reality upon his haughty breath; that slight and lovely woman, mingling the gentler graces of her sex with all the fierce and petulant daring of an errant and high-descended chivalry; the mystery which yet enveloped her and him; my own position—every thing, indeed, taken together, overwhelmed me with a mingled feeling of admiration, dread, confusion, and astonishment.

“In God’s name, can it all be real? What does this mean?” I stammered, as I turned at last, in utter bewilderment, to the French woman.

She laughed, and clapped her hands merrily.

“More things in heaven and earth, Horatio! but come, good *capitaine*, you are hungry. You will find we have something for you to eat, along with the other miracles here. Come! come!”

And she bounded lightly down the steps, and held up her hand to me.

I glanced hastily at the man as I followed her, because I felt his eye upon me, and saw that he was regarding me curiously with a half-sneering smile upon his face; but this instantly changed to one of courtesy, and, making a single bound to the earth, he led the way.

We passed the door of the rancho, and moved down its length beneath the arbor until we reached the great live oak at the end. This tree was heavily hung with long clusters of gray moss, which completely veiled this extremity of the rancho, as many of them hung to the very earth.

Brushing these aside, we passed under, and found ourselves in an open space, or sort of chamber, about ten feet in circumference, formed by the overarching of the huge limbs, some of which had been robbed of the lower clusters of moss just overhead, while those which had been left undisturbed still depended to the earth around

it in an impervious curtain. In the center of this singular bower four forked stakes had been driven into the earth, across which small poles had been placed, forming a square. Stretched over these was a thick matting of colored grasses, which answered for the top of the table. Upon this food was placed in most primitive dishes, formed of great calabashes cut off within an inch or two of the bottom. It consisted of roasted venison and beef, with a sort of soup, composed of parched and pounded wheat, boiled with beef, and seasoned with "*chile*," or the wild red pepper of the country.

I obtained a partial view of a young Indian girl, as I judged, who disappeared behind the moss drapery as we entered. She had probably just placed the food for us.

Hungry as I was, my conscience smote me for my neglect of my men at the sight of this tempting repast.

It was all uncertainty with them, and perhaps, in addition, they were now suffering for want of food.

I had heard their voices as I passed the room they occupied, but had been too much bewildered to note it at the moment.

I turned my head quickly to look for my host, and found he had disappeared. The French woman caught my eye, and answered my perturbed look gayly :

"Never mind the men, *capitaine* ! they have been well provided for : Albert has gone to join them now, to see that all is right."

"But it is necessary that I should see them ; they will not submit—though all your Indians were at the door—to remaining a moment in that room if they have any doubts about my safety. I had better go and speak with them."

I was accordingly turning to pass out, when the moss curtain was put aside, and Landeville, followed by the Frenchman, joined us.

Landeville smiled joyfully as he caressed his new-found sister, and then, with brimming eyes, extended his rough hand to me.

"All right, captain ! The boys are sharp-set, and hard at it with knives and spoons, merry as larks. Come, let's fall to !"

Being thus satisfied, through my unbounded confidence in Landeville, I required no other urging, but forthwith seated myself upon a sort of camp-stool formed of raw hide stretched over a frame of sticks, and addressed myself, without further question, to the gratification of my almost famishing appetite.

Our plates were of the bottom of gourds, like the dishes, and the spoons were of a smaller variety of the same vegetable, which had been neatly cured and scooped.

In attacking the roasted joints we drew our belt-knives, upon which every hunter is accustomed to depend in such exigencies.

There was no such luxury as a fork; and I observed that the French woman used, as a substitute for both knife and fork, a small two-edged and jewel-hilted dagger.

Albert, as she called him, used a large, shining, and richly-mounted blade for the same purpose.

So soon as my hunger had been sufficiently appeased to permit any diversion of my attention from the immediate work in hand, I found time to glance around me, and observe more particularly the bearing of these three persons thus unexpectedly brought together.

Since Landeville had made his appearance, I had rather felt than critically noticed that a great change had come over the mood of the French woman.

Now, when I looked up, I was shocked to perceive that she was very pale, and seemed to be merely making a pretense of eating, while her eyes were downcast, and her lips trembled with emotion.

Albert conversed eagerly with Landeville in French, though I could perceive that he watched her face mean time with sharp and furtive glances.

Landeville, whose brow and face were now open and clear as a sunny day, rattled away with a delighted volubility, and seemed not to notice her dejection.

I thought the Frenchman purposely avoided speaking to me, and, from what I could gather of his conversation with Landeville,

was most industriously and ingeniously engaged in drawing from his good-humored and confiding garrulity—natural enough under such circumstances—all, even the most minute, details concerning our route and adventures, but particularly the purposes of our journey.

These details arrived at, he inquired, one after another, concerning the characters of my men, particularly that of Old Hicks, of whom he asked a great variety of questions.

I soon observed that he was most anxious to ascertain how much the old man had learned concerning the Camanche country and Indians while a prisoner, and that the concealed drift of these questions seemed to be the purpose to find out, if possible, whether he had undertaken to guide us to the Gold Mountain, or had seen it during his captivity.

This catechising was followed up with such reckless and eager interest that I became uneasy ; and feeling assured that Monsieur Albert had taken it for granted that I, as an ignorant Texan backwoodsman, did not understand French, and was letting me into more of his mind than he proposed, I determined, from the disinterested motive of releasing the unconscious Landeville from this dangerous inquisition, to let *monsieur* know that I, at least, understood something of French. I accordingly corrected some slight mistake in regard to date which Landeville had just made, in that language.

So soon as I spoke, the manner of our *monsieur* changed instantly, and he bent upon me a quick, dark look of scrutiny, and immediately changed the topic ; but I could perceive that he was restless and chafed, with all his efforts to appear gay and civil. Once, in venting his spleen, he spoke sharply to the woman concerning her abstraction. She said nothing, but her large eye grew larger and rounder as she gazed steadily into his, and there shot from them flakes of scornful fire, while her fine lips curled slightly. His gaze dropped ; but whether from the natural dislike of well-

bred men for scenes, or from a more powerful cause, I only know that my pulse leaped with a quicker beat from that moment, and I felt a smile of exultation break in the depths of my clouded soul, and radiate outward through every fiber, until it seemed to me my very hair lifted in dumb laughter.

Ha! most worshipful *monsieur*! there is no love lost where such looks as that pass between people, whether it be in the wilderness or in the court!

No doubt the food I had taken had something to do with the sudden exhilaration that now came over me. Be this as it may, a spirit of daring and defiant recklessness now urged and possessed me.

I had been self-humiliated and nearly cowed before, but I felt now that it would never have been but that I was suffering from extreme weakness and exhaustion, consequent upon both hunger and fatigue.

I now cursed, in bitter wrath, the weakness which could ever have made me silent in the presence of this polished and overbearing ruffian.

With all his self-possession, he was looking slightly disconcerted, when I turned suddenly to Landeville, and said to him, with a peculiar sort of gayety, which had its own significance,

"Well, Landeville, don't you miss your rifle this fine morning, old fellow? I feel like a dunghill fowl with its wings clipped; I can neither fight nor fly!"

"Oh, we shall get them!" said Landeville, looking from the face of Albert to that of his sister. "We shall get them soon! Those lousy fellows outside have to be satisfied. There is to be a council this morning!"

"A council as to what disposal is to be made of us: whether we are to be dragged to the tails of wild horses, stuck up to be shot at with arrows, or be pierced with lances! Pleasant alternatives, certainly, for men!"

“And pray,” said Albert, leaning forward, with a grim, over-pleasant smile, “what other alternative have you, good *capitaine*, than that of awaiting and abiding the decision of the council about to meet?”

I sprang to my feet. “You shall find, *monsieur*, that Texan Rangers have many alternatives so long as they have life left! I will not submit to this mystification any longer! Say at once whether you propose to return us our arms forthwith, or expect to hold us prisoners!”

The Frenchman, Albert, rose, with a very ugly look upon his face, and a sort of quivering of the under jaw, which reminded me of the motions of a rattlesnake about to strike. Before he spoke, however, the woman, I perceived, met his eye with a most meaning and remarkable look. His expression changed, and he proceeded quietly to say, “My good *capitaine*, your distrust is misplaced. *I can not act* otherwise than I do now with regard to you and your men. You are safe, and your men are safe. Your arms shall be returned to you so soon as the formality of this council is over. Although I command these Indians, I can not do so in violation of those of their customs which they consider sacred. They will obey my orders in the field, but they will hear nothing in explanation of those matters which form questions of compromise between us, and among these is the disposal of all prisoners. The arms they themselves reserve in their own keeping; and when I shall have satisfied them fully as to your friendliness and the probable character of your mission—which I have no doubt of being able to do—your arms will be restored, and you yourselves welcomed to our midst as brothers and friends.”

I listened quietly to this oily speech; but, on receiving a look of significant intelligence from the woman, I refrained from making the tart answer I intended, and merely bowed assent, as if perfectly satisfied.

We all now moved from the table.

The Frenchman lifted the moss on the opposite side from that by which we left, and disappeared.

I passed with Landeville into the room among the men, and found them just finishing their morning meal.

I told them all that I thought best of what I had seen and heard.

I was now pretty well satisfied that, whatever might be the ulterior purposes of the Frenchman, he had no intention to keep us longer than necessary deprived of our arms, or to endeavor to hold us prisoners; so I stated this conviction to the men, and they agreed to keep quiet, and see what might be the result of the proposed council.

Landeville joined me heartily in giving them assurances of the good faith of the Frenchman.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE COUNCIL.

LEAVING the men quiet, I stepped out into the court again just in time to see the figure of Monsieur Albert emerge from beneath the moss drapery, arrayed in the full costume, so far as he had chosen, or been compelled to adopt it, of a war chieftain; and a more magnificent picture than it furnished of all that is wild, graceful, and imposing in the *possibilities* of savage romance, it is hopeless to conceive.

The tall, athletic figure of the Frenchman, expressing all of agile and symmetrical grace which the union of a Greek precision of finish with that springy freedom of outline peculiar to the Indian form could produce, was also as strikingly costumed. In some of its details he seemed to have studied assimilation to that of the wild warriors he was about to meet in council; in others, he seemed to have disregarded it with a haughty self-will.

His hair, like theirs, was long; but the rich and crisp curls in which it flowed down his back were necessarily unlike the coarse, horse-tail locks of the Indians, and marked the purer and more cultivated race.

Beard, which they hold in great horror, and most sedulously pluck out, he had permitted to grow in dark exuberance about his neck and face.

He wore the buckskin shirt common to them, but it was colored an intense black, and had sleeves, which theirs had not; it also reached lower than theirs, and, as he stepped, disclosed beneath

drawers or pantaloons of scarlet cloth. Fringed leggins, of the same somber color and material of the shirt, were drawn over the pants to half way up the thigh. These leggins were ornamented in front with grotesque figures, worked in white and scarlet beads, while his black moccasins, with a fringe along the front, were ornamented in the same way.

His waist and shoulder belts were of the same material, and worked with smaller figures in the same way.

He wore behind his hips, in his waist-belt, a pair of long rifle pistols, magnificently mounted with gold and pearl, and a little further forward, the glittering knife I had noticed at our meal.

He carried in his hand a lance, something over six feet in length, with a long, stout blade. It was profusely ornamented with scarlet feathers, not only at the socket of the blade, from which also streamed a pennon of scarlet cloth, but at intervals along the staff.

To complete the costume, he wore the circle of dark eagle plumes, which were stuck in what seemed to be a glazed foraging-cap, with the usual shade in front; though, instead of the long train of feathers worn by the Indian chiefs, there was a single cluster of scarlet feathers tied to the end of a lock of his hair behind.

His step had that indescribable springiness in it which belongs to the tireless runners of the northern tribes.

Indeed, in his whole bearing there was something so alert and ruthless, yet so quiet and courteously calm, that, taken together with the somber costume, so studiously relieved by the fierce contrast of the scarlet at every point, he impressed me with the shuddering aversion which the wanderer feels on seeing suddenly the dark, glossy splendor of some venom-painted serpent of the tropics stretched across his path. The arch fiends out of all the gloomy imaginings of hell could hardly have drawn a more significant expression of destructiveness to be embodied in the human form than this strange man exhibited.

In him, it seemed as if the social bravo had grown tired of sneaking murder with the polished tongue thrust amid courts, and had sought the avowed license of savage life to slake a rampant thirst for blood, bringing along with him the keen intellect and consummate tastes of a nobler development to aid an imperious will in wielding these simpler elements of mischief.

As he passed me, he lowered his lance gracefully, inclining his head at the same time.

I acknowledged the courtesy, but felt for the moment uncertain whether to follow, that I might witness the formalities of the council. He gave me no invitation by word or gesture; but, being anxiously curious to witness the scene, I felt bitterly disappointed.

At this moment Landeville and the French woman joined me; she smiled, pointed toward the stiles which Albert was now ascending, and, taking my hand, moved on toward them.

We now mounted to the position we had formerly occupied when first the strange scene of the camp startled my vision.

I now looked over it with a calmer scrutiny.

The eating was over, and most of the fires were smoldering. The warriors had risen to their feet, and with bows, quivers, shields, and lances, they stood in detached, careless groups. Here and there one leaned upon the shaft of his lance with a lounging grace; and I now first observed that the blade of this weapon, unlike that of the Frenchman's, was thin, straight, and something over two feet in length.

It was, as I conjectured, the old Spanish sword-blade, with the famous stamp of Toledo upon it, which is so generally used for this purpose by the southern tribes. Whether this be the genuine "Spanish blade of the ice-brook's temper" is more than I can certify, though I am well qualified to bear witness that it possesses such an amazing degree of elasticity as to be well worthy of as high an origin.

Albert passed among these groups with a light, easy step and assured air, though he looked neither to the right nor the left. As he passed, there was no other indication on the part of the warriors that they had observed him than that afforded by a slight turning of the head to look after him.

He walked on until he had reached the center of the yard, where there was a circular spot left free from the intrusion of camp-fires. Stopping in the center of this, he struck the staff of his lance perpendicularly into the ground, and as he turned his back upon it, some young Indian warriors, who had stepped hastily forward, spread a buffalo robe at his feet. He quietly seated himself upon this, as if he had expected it.

And now, one after another, with stately and rather awkward steps (for these southern tribes are so constantly on horseback that they do not walk well), the chiefs would separate themselves from the different groups, and each, with a squad of young men bearing a buffalo robe at his heels, would advance toward the circular place and take his seat near its circumference: before sitting down, though, each drove the heft of his lance into the earth behind him in a slightly inclining position, as if in deference to the commanding perpendicular of the central lance. Not a sound had been uttered, and the serried circle of the leaning lances was nearly filled up, when I observed a figure moving forward alone, and which was so much unlike the rest as to fix my attention quickly.

A vague recollection of the momentary glimpse I had obtained of my captors flashed across my mind.

They were dingy, greasy, naked to the breech-clout, and wore short leggins, like this ugly, raw-boned, powerful savage.

He strode forward with a lance, upon which there was a small scarlet pennon, and which was carried erect in his hand, and seemed to be more than a foot longer than those of the other chiefs. The bow slung at his back and the arrows in his quiver seemed to be proportionately longer, while his own figure toppled several

inches above the rest. His heavy lance was trimmed with colored feathers like those of the chiefs, but they were differently arranged, and looked soiled and worn. His crown was of longer feathers, and the tail-piece hung a foot lower, and had the same bedraggled appearance.

The upper part of his body was entirely naked, with the exception of the shoulder belt, which sustained the quiver, and this belt was the only feature of his personal equipment which did not strongly contrast with the neatness which characterized that of the other chieftains: this was like that of Albert, black, and ornamented with bright red and white beads.

He strode forward and took his place in the circle, standing erect, with his lance equally so at his side, as if in assertion of defiance.

Though no obsequious train followed bearing a buffalo robe for him to sit down on, yet there came a train after him of a very different character.

It was headed by a chief resembling him in height, and most of those other points of distinction which we have noticed.

He was followed by ten warriors much like himself, each one of whom bore the knife, pistols, rifle, saddle, blanket, &c., comprising the equipment of an individual of our party; in addition, they led our horses, each one of which I recognized as it passed; while in the rear of these came several squaws, leading pack-horses with the small remainder of our baggage.

The train stopped a short distance outside the circle, while the chief stepped forward into place by the side of his predecessor, and assumed the same position. Every thing had moved like clock-work, and there had been no sound from any part of the camp which indicated excitement, or even any particular interest in what was going on.

I observed that these strange-looking Indians had come in through the large gate, which stood wide open. The height of

the picketing, and the abrupt slope of the valley beyond, prevented me from seeing any thing more than the perspective beyond the gate, though it seemed to me that, now the fires were burned down within the yard, I could distinguish beyond the fence many faint lines of smoke which had not before, on account of the intervening fires, made themselves apparent.

The perfect and sober quiet which had prevailed during all these arrangements, and the unmoved look of both the Frenchman and the warrior chieftains by whom he was surrounded, had something inexpressibly imposing in it for me.

So far as I could perceive, there was nothing of ceremonial practiced other than what consists in a gravely decorous quiet of attention. Certainly there was nothing of the mummery of the "pipe of peace," peculiar to the northern and western Indians on such occasions.

In a moment after the bustle of arrival was over, and all had assumed their places, Albert slowly raised his right hand, and lightly touching his lips with the tips of the fingers, threw it up toward the heavens, elevating his eyes at the same time, as if, in this mute pantomime, he called upon the Great Spirit to witness that they spoke the truth, and to overlook the councils of that day.

One after another the chieftains made the same impressive gestures.

The distance was too great for me to distinguish whether any thing was spoken by them or not.

After a slight pause, Albert arose and commenced the "talk." I could not hear what he said, but thought I could read the significance of his quiet gestures. By a courteous wave of the hand, he seemed first to address himself to the chiefs, who were seated. They bowed their heads in stately recognition.

He then turned toward the two who had continued standing, and addressed them with more vehemence, which gradually increased as he would point toward the rancho, toward us, and the

group behind them, which held our horses and arms, and toward the smokes which were rising from behind the picketing.

He now turned toward the seated chieftains as if in appeal, which they seemed to recognize by another simultaneous bending of heads.

He then made a sweeping gesture with arms outspread toward the sky, and suddenly resumed his seat.

There was another slight pause, and then one of the seated chieftains rose slowly from his buffalo robe. I could see that his long hair was gray, and that his limbs and features were sharpened with age, though he seemed erect as any there. His garb was more like Albert's than that of any one I had noticed.

He first bowed to Albert with that slight, though exquisite deference with which the proud natural man recognizes a superior the world over; then he spoke to the rude, erect chieftains for some moments persuasively, pointing occasionally to us, toward our arms and horses, and again to Albert, and sat down.

The grim, rusty-looking giant, who stood first among the strange new-comers to the council, now commenced speaking, and his loud, harsh, guttural tones reached me, though they conveyed no meaning to my ears.

He spoke with great deliberation, and his gestures were, for a time, very calm; but soon he became more excited, and the whole expression of his figure, and his quick, eager gestures, showed that he was angry. As he proceeded, it was evident to me that he was endeavoring to work himself up into a fury.

As he proceeded, becoming more and more violent every moment, he turned frequently with fierce gesticulations, pointing toward our group upon the top of the rancho picketing.

Albert now rose calmly, and the old chief of his party who had spoken followed him. They stepped forward toward the angry savage, and with deprecatory gestures seemed to be endeavoring to soothe him.

He only fell back from the circle, making still more ferocious gesticulations. The chief at his side did the same ; and the warriors behind them, who held our arms, fell back too, and commenced retreating toward the gate with their weapons presented. The chiefs who were sitting sprang to their feet, and plucked up the lances behind them, gathering, at the same time, in a circle about Albert.

Hoarse cries began now to arise from both parties, which were instantly taken up by those within the inclosure, who sprang forward quickly from their postures of lounging indifference with lances and bows in hand, while in echo to the startling whoop of the giant chief, an answer in the same key came up from beyond the picketing.

Indeed, there was every appearance of an immediate collision and fierce affray. I observed that the French woman, who, during the early part of this scene, had been standing silently by my side, had vanished so soon as there appeared any determined indications of serious trouble.

I had been so much occupied in watching the progress of the affair, that I had not turned to look after her, or notice where she went.

There was enough of danger for me and mine in that swaying tumult in front, which seemed to be gathering the terror of deadly strength with every instant, to fully occupy my attention.

The tall, gaunt, half-naked forms of the stranger Indians had begun to crowd into the gate-way. The giant chief was raging yet louder, while his party, formed compactly behind him, hurried their retreat toward the gate. With all these demonstrations of fury, not one blow had yet been exchanged between the parties.

Albert and his Indians, though they evidently had the others entirely in their power, had made no attempt to close the gate. Of course, had this been done, the strange chieftains and their followers would have been at once at their mercy.

Instantly, on perceiving this, I felt there was collusion, and that treachery was intended—that our arms and horses were to be carried off, and we left slavish dependents upon the will of this bad and formidable man.

I instantly resolved to rush back to my men, summon them to one more manly demonstration, unarmed as we all were, for our freedom, and thus end this complicated mystery.

I did not speak to Landeville, and was in the act of stepping down, when a hand from behind, placed upon my elbow, arrested me. Before I could look around, the French woman, bearing a lance, like that of Albert's in other respects, but with a white pennon, stood by me, saying,

“Courage, good *capitaine*; I will have all right.”

The scene was now at its wildest, and I was just in the act of jumping down, when she sprang from the top of the picketing into the midst of the clamorous and swaying tumult. She bore above her head the lance from which streamed that white pennon.

The crowd gave way from her path, and she sped through them like an angel amid troubled waters, leaving a calm behind; for, as they saw her, all paused. She threw herself in front of the raging and gigantic chieftain, and waved the white pennon before his eyes. His recognition of her or of the white pennon was instantaneous; he lowered his lance point and his shield, while the chiefs of the other party recoiled upon their rushing followers, and did the same.

She spoke eagerly to them for some moments in their own tongue, touching frequently her breast with her hand, and then pointing to us. The effect of her eloquence upon the grim chieftain was immediately apparent; he stepped forward to the place formerly occupied by him in the circle of the council, and, making a motion of his hand to his young men, they now brought forward two buffalo robes, and placed them in the circle.

This seemed to indicate a desire to renew the council on different terms from those at first assumed.

Albert, who, it seemed to me, had made a gesture of furious impatience when he first perceived her approaching, had since been standing amid his chiefs in silence, with folded arms, and a dark look of smothered wrath upon his face. What could this mean? Was it because the tiger in him had been roused, and he hated her for having dashed his anticipation of a bloody feast; or was it that the villain had purposely enraged the chief, with the view of breaking up the council, and preventing the return of our arms? This last conclusion seemed to me the most probable when I remembered the silent fixedness with which she had watched the proceedings of the council, and the promptness with which she acted on the first indication of disagreement; taken together, it looked as if she had apprehended something of the sort, and was determined to prevent it.

Oh, how my blood boiled as this last conviction flashed upon me.

"Look out, Sir Albert!" I muttered, between my teeth; "that sleek polish of yours won't glance a bullet!"

Be this as it may, there seemed to be no other course left him than to renew the council on the new footing of conciliation proposed so significantly by the big chief, whose associate had now stepped forward to his side.

The Frenchman strode hastily to his place in the center, struck down his lance with great force, and resumed his seat. The woman quietly stepped forward, holding up her lance with the pennon of peace, and took her seat on the robe beside him. Then the two strange chiefs struck down their lances in an inclined position, and sat down likewise. The others now came forward and resumed their places as before, while the two parties of warriors fell back into their original positions of lounging indifference.

The discussion was resumed, though evidently with great restraint and caution on both sides. It was protracted for some time, during which the woman frequently interrupted Albert and the other speakers, though without rising.

I was greatly surprised at this, since the Indian's contempt for the intrusion of their women into the action or councils of war is proverbially strong; and how this woman had managed, in defiance of this stern prejudice, to make herself not only a leader in battle, but as well to be heard and respected in their deliberations, was more than I could well conjecture.

Suffice it for the present, she evidently did exert a great influence, however obtained, both over Albert, whose imperious will she smilingly countervailed without hesitation, but as well over these wild chiefs, whose decisions seemed to be controlled by her in opposition to the purposes of Albert.

Soon the tall chieftain arose and turned toward his followers, who advanced toward Albert with the arms and horses.

The first they laid at his feet, and the lariats of the second they gave into his hands.

The woman sprang forward, and laid her hand upon the bare, swarthy arm of the chief, and seemed to be thanking him, for I could even see the eloquence of her upturned, glowing face from the distance at which I stood; she then started toward us, and as she came near, beckoned us to descend and join her. I did so without hesitation, and was followed promptly by Landeville.

"Your arms have been surrendered, and you are now invited to join us as brothers and friends!" she said, breathlessly, as we joined her.

"What am I to understand by this? Is it that we are to become Indians, or what do you mean?"

"I mean that you are to be adopted into one of the tribes, as we are. You are to become a member of our confederacy, and your men are expected to follow your example in a short time."

"Upon my word, mademoiselle, this is rather an extraordinary expectation. Pray, what is understood by our becoming a member of your confederacy?" and I stopped short.

"Bah!" said she, with a sort of laughing impatience, as she

seized my hand and pulled me. "Suspicious again, good *capitaine!* Don't you see it is merely a ceremonious expediency? We are dealing with thick-headed savages, and must manage them through their own forms and notions of things. You could not make them trust you for a moment, or realize that you were friendly, unless you came in through adoption. This I took the liberty of promising on your behalf without any hesitation, because I thought you had common sense enough to see the necessity of conciliating them, at least until you had regained your arms; then you are able, of course, to make your own terms, and, if called upon to do what you do not choose to do, can refuse, and, what is still more to the point, sustain yourself. Pray, what would heroics on your part amount to now, in this crowd of lances?"

This argument was so irresistible, that, without further hesitation, and, indeed, with something of a feeling of shame, I followed toward the circle of chiefs, who seemed to be awaiting us.

As we approached, that benevolent philosopher, Albert, stepped forward to greet me, with a degree of affectionate suavity which I could not help feeling to be uncomfortably loving in its expression.

The chieftains had risen and admitted Landeville and myself into the center of the ring. Albert commenced speaking to me slowly, while the woman translated what he said to the chiefs.

"You are an American captain and a Texan. We have long been the enemies of Texas, and have no love for Texans. But it appears that you, at great risk and danger to yourself, have rescued this woman from a tribe which once belonged to our confederacy. Your party was taken by the tribe which is represented here by that great chief," pointing, at the same time, to the tall savage.

"They came upon you while you were all sound asleep, and had been sent out by me to rescue this woman. They tied you, and brought you off blindfolded—though, of course, as the woman was well known to them, and had frequently commanded them, she

was furnished with a horse, and when the Kewanies made their attack at the watering-place, she used your pistols and drove them back ; but for this, our party would have been routed. You were conveyed here in the mode of conducting prisoners known to our tribes. You all suffered from it severely, but the woman could not help it, for our tribes have ways of their own, which they will not suffer to be intruded upon in any manner, and will only consent to modify in full council. They had a right to hold you as prisoners, under our compact, and to dispose of you, and your arms and horses, as they thought proper.

“ A difficulty was like to have grown upon this point, when the woman came in with the white emblem, and explained to the chiefs how it was that you were evidently one of us, since you had shown so much sympathy for her, and had so stoutly fought the traitor Kewanies, both in rescuing her, and in the camp-fight, when she killed their young chief. We therefore now propose to adopt you, as I myself was once adopted, into the confederacy of what was originally four, but now three tribes, who proudly avow themselves as the children of Cain !”

I saw at once what “ we propose to adopt you” meant in the mouth of Albert, and that there was no alternative left but unquestioning submission on my part.

I was a prisoner, and in their power. What could I do but submit ? My own life had long resembled theirs so closely, that there could really be no very strong revoltings on the score of taste, and then on that of policy it would be sheer insanity to exhibit any want of cordiality in acceding to this patronizing compromise.

With arms in hand we might afford to debate consequences, but not now. I accordingly bowed low in acknowledgment of the honor proposed to be paid us, and requested Albert to express to the great chiefs my gratitude.

Indeed, I launched out in a mocking spirit, but in true Oriental style, upon a figurative “ talk,” in which I expressed my profound

admiration of the prowess and glory of the mighty Camanche Confederacy, and my appreciation of the dignity and distinction about to be conferred by the adoption of my brave comrades and myself by them. I dwelt in the true spirit of Indian braggadocio upon the formidable character of our capabilities and bravery, and wound up with a grand flourish, in which I duly set forth the terror which our mutual heroism and united arms would carry to the hearts of all enemies.

This magniloquent tirade was gravely translated to the listening chiefs by Albert.

They heard it in profound silence ; but when I paused, several of the chiefs shook their heads, and there ran around the circle a low murmur. The grim chief who had been my captor spoke loudest, and with most seeming of dissatisfaction. I was somewhat surprised that my eloquent outburst had not produced a greater effect. Albert, after listening in silence to what was said, turned to me, and spoke in a soft, persuasive tone,

"Brave captain, our chiefs are much pleased with your talk, but they insist that you are still a Texan. We all hate Texans, and they demand that you must revoke your allegiance to Texas before they can receive you as a brother ; that you can easily do, to satisfy them !"

This last remark was accompanied with a sneer, which he clearly made no effort to conceal.

I felt as if the sting of a serpent had struck me. The hot blood mounted to my forehead, and my impulse was to dash my hand into the face of the insidious fiend, whose unshrinking purpose I now read without the shadow of an interposing doubt.

That crafty opening of his speech to me had clearly dwelt upon the fact of our being Texans, and of the mortal enmity existing between them and the tribes, for the purpose of bringing up this very point as an issue between us, and preventing thereby a peaceful consummation. Baffled once by the woman, he had returned to

his purpose again, coolly calculating upon the prompt excitability of temperament he supposed me to possess for bringing on an outbreak so soon as the demand that I should forswear my country was presented.

The whole game was transparent to me now, and I became perfectly cool in an instant.

The woman had stepped forward anxiously to interpose, as if she dreaded the same result from my heady want of tact. I turned to her with a calm, meaning look, which she seemed at once to understand, as I meant it to say, I am not to be entrapped by that shallow trick ! and she fell back with a satisfied expression.

My heart swelled and my brain throbbed with the suppressed fire of indignation. But I thought, with a sneering chuckle, our oily courtier shall find that my impulses are not as he calculated—those of the blind animal. He shall learn that the same caution which kept alive my suspicion, has alike governed those passionate outbreaks, upon a renewal of which he has now calculated ; I too, he shall find, though not a trained courtier, know how to control my impulses, and to make *appearances tell* ! I have entered upon this as a game of *expediency*, and am not to be baffled. I merely turned upon him a calm expression of surprise, and, feeling that he would not dare, in the presence of the woman, to mistranslate what I said, answered him, with a smiling look and measured voice,

“ We are neither Americans nor Texans ; we are outlaws ! We became outlaws, in the first place, when we left our own government—that of the great United States—in violation of its laws, and went to Texas. We never swore allegiance to the Constitution of Texas, and, in leaving its limits without leave from her government, virtually proclaimed ourselves outlaws in the act ; knowing that, in coming into the country of her enemies, we were liable to be treated by her authorities as outlaws, wherever found. Our hand, too, is against every man, and every man’s hand is against us ! We recognize no law but that of honor, and no faith

T

but that of friendship. 'We owe allegiance to no power, and we, too, are the free men of the wilds; then why should we not be brothers?'

Albert slowly translated this, word for word, while the woman watched him narrowly. The chiefs seemed to be entirely satisfied, and rose simultaneously, while my grim giant captor advanced and took me by the hand.

Albert, who had stooped and selected my arms from the heap at his feet, now stepped forward and handed them to me, at the same time giving the lariat of my horse into the hands of Landeville as my follower: he then stepped back to his place.

The gigantic chief now came forward again, and administered in pantomime a sort of oath of allegiance.

He merely touched the front of my head, and then my left breast lightly, brushing my lips with his finger as he brought up his hand.

I bowed my head, and then he touched his own forehead, his heart, and his lips, and threw up both hands toward heaven.

This was quite as significant as gestures could well make it, of the fact that I was merely accepted as his vassal, or, rather, into the rank of a common warrior of his tribe.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SUDDEN PROMOTION.

It made little difference to me upon what terms I was admitted, as I had no intention that they should bind me for a moment beyond my convenience, or the earliest opportunity of escape.

Albert now spoke in a low tone to Landeville, who withdrew from the circle, leading my horse.

In a moment afterward, and before I could think, I found myself surrounded by a greasy, dark, and almost naked crowd of the warriors belonging to the tribe of the great chief, who bore me out of the circle into a large space which had been formed within the inclosure. I was startled at first by this unexpected movement, but, on looking around, I perceived that the faces of all expressed pleasure and friendliness; so I reconciled myself to submit patiently to some barbaric ceremony of initiation.

I observed that the chief stood apart, a short distance from the throng, surrounded by several others who had joined him.

The warriors, who all seemed to be young men, now proceeded most expeditiously to divest me of every stitch of clothing, while my arms, which were gently taken from my grasp, were laid at my feet.

My white skin, now that I stood nude among them, contrasted strongly with the swarthy circle which pressed close about me, and there was much laughing and good-humored pantomime as they placed their bare arms and legs beside mine, to heighten the effect.

But soon a warrior came pushing through the circle, who drag-

ged along an old, haggish-looking squaw by one hand. She held in the other a calabash filled with a dark-looking liquid, and, as the crowd gave way for her, she proceeded deliberately to smear every part of my body with the coloring matter, and in a few moments the offensive fairness was obliterated from my unfortunate cuticle, and I stood among them dark as the darkest of them all.

They shouted with delight when this process was finished, and then the squaw disappeared.

Several young warriors then came forward, and, laying violent hands upon me, I suddenly found myself invested with the breechclout, moccasins, and short leggins; then another shout of grotesque merriment went up, as they surveyed this addition to my progressive transformation.

Now the crowd gave way, and the big chief stepped forward, bearing in his hands a bow, quiver, lance, and shield, such as were worn by the warriors, and gave them into the hands of one of the young men. He proceeded at once to invest me with them. The quiver was thrown over my right shoulder, suspended by a plain buckskin belt. The under side of the shield being presented, I thrust my left arm up to the elbows through the loops; then a bow which was strung was offered me. This I took in my right hand. Another warrior now stepped forward, bearing a long lance. This he offered to my right hand, and I grasped it along with the bow; but then, in obedience to the gestures of another warrior, who stood in front of me, seemingly in the capacity of a fogleman, I quickly leaned it against the hollow of my left arm, and, drawing an arrow over my right shoulder from the quiver, placed it in my bow, and then drawing it back, stood in the position of shooting.

I had now entered fully into the spirit of this mummary, and endeavored to make the posture I had assumed as imposing and expressive as possible. In a moment a tremendous shout went up, and the warriors sprang forward, those in front of the circle cross-

ing their lance-blades high over my head, while those in the rank behind touched the points of theirs together, a little lower, and then they commenced moving round me in a regular dance, which was slow at first, accompanied by a monotonous sing-song, to which they kept time with the slow clash of the shifting lance-blades.

My fugleman, who still retained his position, now let off his arrow, through the shafts of the over-arching lances, high into the air. I instantly followed his example with entire success, though it was as entirely accidental, and then promptly placed another arrow in my bow, and assumed the same posture.

Now they gave a louder yell, and sprang forward in a quicker movement, keeping time with their voices and the heightened clatter of their changing lances. I now perceived, from the alert and eager look of my fugleman, that he was watching the accelerated whirl of the circling lance-shafts for the opportunity to let go another arrow between them without striking, and this feat I felt was to be one of the tests to which my claims and rank as a warrior were to be, however unfairly, subjected.

I, of course, knew little comparatively of the bow, though I had often practiced its use while on the Trinity, and with considerable success. But now my skill and experience as a rifleman came to my aid. I remembered how, in shooting at game, either running or flying, with that weapon, we were accustomed to follow the undulations of its movement for a few seconds along the sights, and then, when we had got "the hang of it," fire. This I saw was just what my fugleman was doing. I did the same thing, feeling a swelling consciousness that I should succeed; for now a crisis had come, and all my nerve obeyed the summons to meet it. A failure would probably be utter disgrace, and success, perhaps, an extraordinary triumph, great in proportion to the palpable unfairness of the test.

I felt as if all my life were centered in my eye and hand, and as if one were fire and the other steel.

I followed the swift whirl of shafts above me with steady watchfulness until I caught the movement, and then I heard the twang of the other bow. I paused but a moment, and let fly my arrow.

Such a deafening burst of clamorous applause as followed when it flew free, would be difficult to imagine, and my ears fairly ached as I threw the bow to the ground. The warriors bounded away at once upon a dance, verily wilder and madder than any Macbeth's witches ever whirled, and which was accompanied by such hideous sounds of voices, mingled with the rasping and metallic clangor of their lance-blades, that I was utterly bewildered, and at a loss to know whether I really stood on earth, or had been hurled into some raging pandemonium of another world.

I do not know how long this strange scene continued, for I was too utterly confused and astounded to be capable of estimating time. I remember that the dizzy hurricane of sound and action around me was suddenly stilled ; that the eddy opened, and the human current swept back on both sides, spreading into a line, and left me standing alone in a wide space, on the outermost verge of which I perceived the grim chief standing with his suite.

What could there be about to follow now ? The warriors had recognized me as one of their number ; they had arrayed me in the costume, and equipped me with arms of their rank ; then what now ? All eyes seemed to be directed toward the chief and myself, as if it was expected that something yet of greater moment was to happen.

At a commanding gesture from the chief, the warrior who had hitherto acted as fogleman to me now came forward from the line with his bow in his hand, and took a position at my side. At the same moment, another warrior came forward from the line bearing a pealed rod about three feet in length, and the size of a man's thumb. He struck this into the ground about a foot in advance of a post of the picket-fence, which had been charred by the fires ; though the distance was over sixty paces, yet this dark back-ground

enabled me to distinguish the thin white slip quite distinctly. I at once recognized this as a common mark for rifle and pistol practice in the southwest.

The warrior who stood by my side now threw himself gracefully into position, and shot an arrow at the white line. I saw the rod tremble to and fro: it had been touched by the glancing arrow. The warrior shook his head, drew another arrow, and shot again with great deliberation.

This time there was a great shouting, for the arrow quivered in the center of the rod, which it had entered as far as the socket of its point. He now threw down his bow, pointed to mine, which lay upon the ground, and folded his arms proudly.

My rifle and pistols lay at my feet. I shook my head, turned from the bow, and picked up my rifle.

In a moment I saw it was loaded, and without giving the warrior time to protest, I raised it and fired. The arrow was shivered to splinters by the ball, and the rod cut in two.

There was a pause of utter and blank astonishment when a warrior held up the fragments so that all might see. It was certainly a lucky shot. Then such a yell as they gave! The line was broken in an instant; the warriors rushed to me in a body, and bore me to and fro, in front of Albert and his chiefs, yelling like crazy devils at a triumph. After indulging themselves for a few moments in thus regaling the eyes of the rival tribe with a sight of the new acquisition in championship which they seemed to feel they had obtained to themselves in my humble person, they obeyed the voice of their chieftain, and, leaving me in the same spot, fell back into line again. A new rod was placed; and now my fugleman, instead of shooting on his part, came forward, and with a respectful obeisance handed me one of my pistols, and pointed at the rod. He then fell back into my rear.

It was expecting rather too much of pistols generally that they should tell at such a distance; but I had great confidence in my

splendid rifle-barrels at any range within a hundred yards, and as I felt that I should unquestionably lose ground with my new allies should I alter the distance, I determined, not without some tremor, upon risking the experiment.

I found the pistol, as the rifle had been, carefully loaded. This, and the fact of their being there, I could only attribute to the kind and watchful care of the French woman, who had, probably from her knowledge of the Indians, anticipated some such scene, or, at least, that I might have some occasion for promptly using my weapons.

I fired very carefully at the rod, and succeeded, happily, in cutting it half in two.

The warriors now made another clamorous demonstration of delight, which I interrupted by quickly picking up the other pistol, and firing again at the now bending rod. This time it was cut square off, and fell amid the most stunning hurrahs.

The warriors now closed around me in a wide circle, with only an opening left between my own position and that occupied by the chief. After a short pause, during which perfect silence had fallen upon all, the giant approached me alone, with slow and stately steps. I observed, as he came forward, that many changes and additions to his costume had been made, which gave to his figure a far more striking and imposing aspect. He now wore upon his wrists and ankles wide bands of silver. A crescent of the same metal depended loosely from the lower edge of his feathered crown in front, and lay upon his forehead. He wore a necklace of flat pieces also, each of which was cut into a different shape, as stars, circles, triangles, &c., while a large piece, cut into the shape of a crescent, hung down over the swarthy and naked breast in striking contrast. His feathered crown had been renewed, and now showed in untarnished splendor. A wide robe of buffalo skin fell down behind his shoulders nearly to his heels. His arms and other appointments seemed much as they were before, except that they had been renewed in ornaments.

He came up close to me, and made a low salaam which would not have discredited Oriental courtesy, and then deliberately proceeded to divest himself, first of his crown of eagle feathers, and then of the other articles of his costume, except the leggins, breech-clout, and moccasins ; each of these, beginning with the crown and its long tail, he laid at my feet.

I was dumb with astonishment at this unexpected maneuver ; nor was this at all decreased when he turned with a humble gesture and walked back to his place, leaving these extraordinary trophies at my feet.

I had no time for speculation, for the Frenchman now advanced toward me, leading by the hand a most remarkable-looking figure. It was an Indian, whose form not at all rivaled the gigantic proportions of the chief who had just retreated.

He was about the average height of the men of civilization, and his form, though still erect, was greatly attenuated.

His long, snowy hair, which swept half way to his feet, was parted above a broad, swelling, ample brow, the developments of which I have seldom seen surpassed by those of the most cultivated and intellectual heads of civilization.

The costume was precisely that in which I have described the chief who had just laid it all at my feet, with the solitary exception that, instead of the full circle of feathers on his head, he wore in front a single feather, taller than I had yet seen. His face expressed great astuteness, and though the calm fire in his eye was strong as ever, his steps tottered slightly.

From what I knew of the tribes already, I at once conjectured that this was the civil or executive chief, of whom the war chief is only a lieutenant.

It had been the war chief with whom I had been dealing, and now a higher impersonation of power had come forward to dispose of that paraphernalia of rank which he had voluntarily surrendered.

The Nestor of the tribes approached me closely, when Albert released his hand, and stood apart.

He spoke a few words in a slow but trembling voice, which Albert translated.

"White man, we have heard that you are a chief among your own people. For many suns we have known of your deeds, and we have always found them worthy. This day you have proved yourself by all your feats to be a great warrior, worthy even to command in war the mighty Camanches, who are the fathers of all the tribes. You have been adopted as a warrior, and now your brothers ask you to be their war chief.

"I am the great chief above all, and my fathers were the mighty sires of chieftains. It is my right to deny their wishes, but I am well pleased with you, and would have you to lead my people, and I would have you bring your people to join us. This," pointing to Albert, "is a great war chief of one tribe, whom I have appointed above three; but you and he are now brothers."

He then paused, and, slightly elevating his hand, stepped forward, and touched first my left breast, then my lips and forehead. He then went through the same pantomime upon his own person, and spread out his arms toward the heavens, while his face, at the same time, was upturned impressively for a moment.

He now made a significant gesture toward the young warriors. They came forward quickly, and sooner than I could well realize what was going on, the silver bracelets were around my arms and legs; the necklace, with its quaint large figures and its pendant crescent, was about my neck. Before I could recover from my astonishment, the warriors fell back, and the tall chieftain, who had so strangely surrendered in my favor, came forward, and threw about my shoulders the dark belt, beaded with crimson and white, of which I have spoken.

The gray chief now came forward, and, lifting the crown of eagle feathers at my feet, placed it upon my head.

He then spoke a few words in a very deliberate manner, which Albert hastened to translate.

“You are now elected by the warriors of this great tribe, the Camanch, which has given name to a great confederacy, and which is the source of all other tribes, as their war chief.

“I, who am chief above all in the confederacy, now confirm your election; go and be terrible to your enemies as you are true to your friends!”

And then there was a great rush. First Albert took my hand and pressed it to his heart, saying, “Now we are brothers and equals!” Then the chiefs of the tribe which had elected me, the first of whom was the grim giant of whom I have so often spoken, and who had been deposed, or had surrendered in my favor, came and took my hand, which they not only pressed upon their hearts, but laid upon the top of their bowed heads; then the warriors pressed forward, making a lower obeisance in sign of allegiance.

They came forward so rapidly, and I was so confounded by this sudden elevation, that I did not keep very accurate count, but I supposed that something like two hundred thus gave in their allegiance within half an hour.

The gray chieftain and Albert had now disappeared, and another wild dance set in, of which I was made the center. I was too much confused and astonished to observe very accurately.

The first thing which recalled me to consciousness of all that had occurred, was the presence of the French woman at my elbow, who touched me lightly, and said, “Sir Chieftain! you are inaugurated now; will you condescend to honor your humble friend with your company for a few moments?”

I yielded to her touch instinctively, and followed her.

When we reached the steps into the court rancho, she paused with me on the top, and looking back upon the troubled and still agitated scene we had left, she said,

“You acquitted yourself bravely, my good *capitaine*. Had you been any less successful than you were, *we* should have been defeated, and *he* would have succeeded.”

"Hah!" said I, "you mean Albert?"

"Yes; and you have so impressed these savages, that, in spite of all his machinations, they have elected you second in command to himself, and now he can not help it. He can not have it all his own way, though he certainly holds great power yet."

"Will you tell me," said I, turning to her with an eager look, "why he so evidently attempted to prevent the return of my arms in the first place, and then, when you had baffled him in this, why he still endeavored to throw obstacles in the way of my adoption?"

"No! no! I am not at liberty to explain now; you may rest contented, not only that you have triumphed, but that you have a true friend, and a watchful one, in me. Exert the influence you have gained boldly. You have power now, and let him see that you are not afraid to use it. Your men will be expected to come out one at a time, to go through the same ceremonies to which you were subjected when adopted as a warrior. Of course they will not be carried further along just yet.

"I had so spoken concerning you to them, that they were prepared to expect in you a great warrior; and although it was not intended at first to make you a chief at once, your success in the tests to which you were subjected was so brilliant and unexpected, that the warriors were quite transported, and, carried away by their admiration, demanded you for a war chief on the spot. You must now talk with your men, and induce them to come out and go through all the mummary in the same spirit of good-natured philosophy you have displayed. My brother has taken your horse in his charge. We will see him at the rancho, and send him forward first."

Such a bounding ecstasy of delight as I now felt since she had assumed toward me a tone something approaching to confidence, in thus speaking of the purposes of Albert, and warning me to place myself in watchful antagonism to him! She had acknowledged distrust in that courtly villain, and leaned upon me. I was per-

fectly happy. It mattered not what the connection between them, yet unexplained, might be; still she trusted me, and did not trust him; that was sufficient, for the time at least.

I found Landeville patiently holding my noble horse at the door of the rancho. He had brought him in at a small gate in the back line of the picketing, which I had not before seen. The French woman had pointed it out to him.

I was filled with joy to meet my old and faithful comrade, and he pricked his small ears and shook his grand mane in welcome to me.

The men were crowded about the door; and as they recognized me, after some delay, through my grotesque discoloration and costume, they shouted a laughing welcome. When they understood the character of the new dignity which had been conferred, they gave me, at the top of their voices, three cheers, in which laughter struggled quaintly with the hurrahs.

So soon as quiet could be restored, I explained to them all that had happened, and what they were expected to undergo, together with the motives of policy which dictated this course on our part.

At first there was a general murmur of dissatisfaction.

They had no idea of becoming lousy Camanches! They had not left home with any such purpose, nor had they any fancy for breech-clouts, bows, and lances. Indeed, the commotion rose higher and higher as they mutually commented upon the conditions and usages of Camanche life, until they would no longer hear my reasoning, and there was every appearance of a mutiny.

Old Hicks had heretofore been silent, and now, as the turbulent demonstrations increased to a point which seemed about to defy my authority, the veteran came forward, in answer to an appealing look from me, and spoke to the men in his slow, emphatic way for a few minutes.

His opinions were profoundly respected by them, and when he told them that I had obtained an extraordinary and unprecedented

honor through my own prowess, and one which would a thousand fold increase the dignity and security of our position among these wild tribes, they all gave in at once, and professed themselves ready to do any thing that might be required.

One after another they now went forth, passed through the ordeal, and returned bearing their recovered arms, and leading their horses ; but their comical appearance as they came back, with their skins discolored and the breech-clouts on, bearing the lance, bow, and shield in addition to their own arms, elicited shouts of merriment from us all.

At last it came to Old Hicks's time to go out, and I felt considerable anxiety as to the result ; but the old man soon returned smiling, and told me that neither he nor any one of the men had been subjected to the severe tests of skill in arms through which I had passed, and that they were merely accepted or adopted into the tribe as common warriors.

I was greatly gratified at this news, which seemed at least to promise present repose, when, hearing a slight stir behind me, I turned, and saw Albert at my elbow, with the same smiling, though somewhat deferential aspect. He merely said,

“ Sir Chief, the tribes are to exhibit before you this afternoon their peculiar feats in horsemanship and customs in war ; of course you will attend ? ”

I bowed, and he passed on.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GAMES.

HAD it been possible, I should certainly have contrived to have had Old Hicks near me all the time throughout the scenes of the last two chapters. He understood the language of the Camanches well, and I should have known myself to be, perhaps, more secure with him near me. I say *perhaps*, in deference to that common sense which I may now, from my dignified position of war chief, be supposed to possess, though the truth is I had no thoughts about the matter at all—I only *felt*.

The French woman was near me, and that was sufficient ; for, like all intense temperaments, mine, though slow to trust, when confidence was once established, rushed to the other extreme of prodigal faith.

This sensitiveness in bestowing confidence is not the tame and cowardly virtue it is often represented, nor is it the result of cold calculation.

There is a cold calculation in it if we may suppose the deep volcano is calculating, when it heaves its smothered fires against the mountain ribs of its black prison, that it may find a place for the utterance of its glowing heart, mad for the freedom of the wide air, and a clear leap toward the embraces of the sun ; unless the leap be clear, there is no embrace, and so it moils and rages, self-consuming on, until it finds the rift which opens to the sky. Apart from grandiloquent images, those who love and trust profoundly do not bestow their love and trust lightly, for nothing is so terri-

ble to such as any trifling with what to them constitutes the holy of holies.

Such natures, when finally driven to recoil upon themselves, become at once the most subtle and fearfully relentless.

That which is good and noblest in our being, like all strong forces, plays between the extremes.

But this is getting rather ethical for a Texas Ranger and Camanche war chief!

I had felt apprehensions when Old Hicks went out to be adopted, because I knew that Albert was now fully aware of his value, and thought it probable that he would endeavor, by some new maneuver, to separate him from us, by having him adopted into his own tribe. I therefore felt great relief when he returned, announcing that the ceremony had passed without any particular attention being attracted to him.

The doctor, who had been strangely silent through all these late scenes, now suddenly resumed his gay and reckless manner.

The men said that it was because he had got back his precious air-gun, which, for a wonder, considering its delicate machinery, the awkward savages had not injured. After first trying it out behind the rancho, so as to satisfy himself of this fact, he now came back, hugging it to his breast like a dear infant, and dancing with many grotesque expressions of delight, which set us all in a roar.

Samson had got back his hair! Richard was himself again!

This time I ate with the men, and a rollicking, jovial company we had of it, as we jested each other upon the grotesque figures we made, with our stained skins, in our new costume.

But, after our meal and the first blush of the novelty of the thing was over, the doctor began to make it appear that he felt himself sadly aggrieved by the loss of his famous Hamlet cloak and those other sundries of personal adornment we have mentioned,

and to which he had clung with such pertinacity. He at first alluded to it jokingly, and then began to growl in earnest.

This was touching a tender spot, and the men chimed in at once, though it was by no means a solemn or a peaceful chime they made among them.

They swore roundly that they would not stand to be made "darkies" of in this extempore fashion, nor would they be compelled to wear this barbarous "togger," as they called it. They had their arms in their hands now, and would undertake to whip the whole Camanche confederacy rather than submit to such degradation.

This was a ticklish point, upon which I had all along apprehended difficulty, not only because I entirely sympathized with them in their feelings, and had myself come to the resolution to resume, at least in part, my old costume, but as well because I knew perfectly that they, too, would never submit. I therefore agreed with them at once that we would wash off the coloring matter, and compel the restoration of our clothes.

Old Hicks here interposed his calm experience, and told us that they had served him just so when he was taken prisoner; but added, that we were not expected to continue in this costume longer than the games of the evening lasted. A compromise would then be agreed upon, and we would be permitted to resume so much of our old apparel as we insisted upon, and would, of course, wash the stains from our skins, if we preferred.

It was with some difficulty I induced the men to accept this compromise. They were still grumbling, when the French woman, who had heard the sounds of an angry discussion, and no doubt suspecting the cause, stepped into our midst, and repeated in substance what the old man had said; adding that, as the war chief, I had the right rather to make them adopt our costumes to a certain degree, as Albert had done.

This assurance, together with the charm which her presence

seemed to exercise upon every one, was entirely sufficient to soothe the men, and they prepared themselves gayly to go forth to witness the games.

These, the French woman told me, were given in honor of my inauguration, and that we were not expected as participators, but as lookers-on. The men left their own arms behind, and took only those of the tribe. In common with Albert, I had a right to my belt pistols, which I took, carrying, in addition, the lance, shield, bow, &c.

We mounted the picket stiles, and found our horses standing on the other side, with all their equipments lying near them. The savages, not understanding their management, had left them for us to put on.

We were soon in the saddle, and when I turned, Albert was galloping toward us from the great gate, mounted upon a jet-black horse of the medium size, but of amazing muscle and power.

The creature bounded beneath his heavy form with the springiness of a frightened antelope. There was no alteration in his equipment that I could perceive, and the scarlet pennon on his lance fluttered audibly as he approached.

"The tribes are not here, as you perceive," said he, as he reined up by my side, and waved his hand around the yard. "They are beyond, and are awaiting you : come !"

We followed him, and dashed through the gate in a swift gallop.

As we passed into the open plain of the descending valley, a most striking array presented itself.

On the right, as we came out, the buck-skinned warriors of Albert exhibited themselves, mounted and drawn up in a long line, beginning near the gate.

They were in single file, and there seemed to have been some effort to present the precise front of a disciplined parade ; but the line was rather eccentric to please the trained eye. They all held their lances presented just above their horses ears, like a squadron

of Polish lancers about to charge. Divested of the supernumeraries of the camp, they now appeared to me to number about three hundred warriors.

On the left, at something like fifty paces, and about opposite the middle of this comparatively prim array, the tribe of which I was now the honored chief was gathered, in a dark, confused mass; some in their saddles, and others stretched upon the grass at the feet of their horses.

This was certainly in striking contrast with what was presented on the other side; but when my warriors saw us galloping down the open space, those who were dismounted sprang with wonderful agility into their saddles, and all dashed forward to meet me, with yells, clashing their lances together. Albert disappeared at once from my side and rode over to join his own tribe, and Old Hicks promptly closed into his place.

The warriors, who seemed to move as by a single impulse, after circling around our group once, broke away and resumed their former confused position.

I perceived a group, wearing the half-circle crowns, clustered at the nearer edge of the mass. I concluded them to be "captains of the people," perhaps answering to the same rank in our own service, and accordingly took my position in front of them; while all the men, with the exception of Old Hicks, whom I signed to remain with me, fell back among the warriors.

The venerable person whom I have described as the civil chief now took his position at the head of the open space between the two lines. All seemed to be waiting for him; and upon the waving of his hand, quick as thought, ten of the common warriors nearest me wheeled their horses into the open space with as much precision as if there had been but one horse, and one rider to guide it.

They gave a loud whoop, and set off down the lines at full speed. In a moment the riders disappeared, and to my startled vision it seemed most like a troop of wild horses flying from us; and, though

I soon remembered the common maneuver they had so often practiced in their fights with us, yet the feat now seemed not less dexterous, from its unexpectedness.

They had laid themselves along the left side of their horses, leaving nothing visible on the line of the back but the horns of the saddles and the right knee of the leg, by which they clung to their saddles.

They were riding in a close squad when they assumed this position ; but first one shot ahead, then another, another, and so on, until the whole ten were careering in single file, at short distances apart.

At the moment this maneuver had been performed, a warrior had galloped out from Albert's side and struck down a lance, to which was attached a round white target of dressed buffalo robe, stretched upon a rim of wood. They passed within about forty paces of it, and each warrior, as he went by, let off an arrow at it from under the neck of his horse, and then, quick as thought, the horses swerved and turned short upon the return track.

As they did so, each warrior shifted his body to the other side of his horse, and at a long distance dismissed another arrow at the target. They were gathered into a squad again as they rejoined us, and sat erect in their saddles.

They exhibited great precision and dexterity in this maneuver. They resumed their places, while a warrior, who galloped in their rear, presented me the target.

It was about two feet in diameter, and I counted in it sixteen arrow-holes of the twenty arrows which had been shot.

Another party of the same number now wheeled out, and set off, apparently, in fierce pursuit of the unfortunate target-bearer, who spurred his horse before them as if for dear life.

This party bore no lances or bows, but rode swinging in their right hands the slip-noose of a lariat, the coil of which swung from their saddle-bows.

The poor fugitive was apparently overcome with fright, and when the foremost of his pursuers had approached within about ten paces of him, he threw up both his arms, as if in an agony of terror. The lariat was instantly thrown over one arm, and now the most extraordinary feats of agile horsemanship were exhibited by both, each in the apparent effort to unhorse the other.

The fugitive performed feats which I had never before imagined possible to any human being under such circumstances. It had seemed to me that the first tension of the lariat should either have jerked him from his horse, or torn off his arm ; but, to my astonishment, suddenly as his captor stopped his horse, this extraordinary Centaur checked his also, and the deadly rope hung for an instant slack between them. There was only a momentary pause, and they rushed on, the hindmost apparently endeavoring to drag the other back from his seat, and he, with the most inconceivable alertness and nervous dexterity, seeming not only to baffle these efforts, but, as well, to be striving to drag the other after his own horse. Sometimes the strength and skillful horsemanship of one would overcome for a moment, and then that of the other would gain the advantage. Now one would drag the other after him ; then, round and round, in an eccentric circle, they would spin ; or else pause, watching each other, panting in wary stillness. It was a game of extraordinary prowess ; for, if either had for an instant succeeded in tightening the lasso diagonally to the impetus of the other, with the side of his horse presented, then that one must inevitably have been thrown flat ; but the extraordinary skill exhibited consisted in the fact that they watched each other's movements so closely as not to permit this advantage to be attained. The noose of the lasso was about the shoulder of the fugitive, and did not confine his movements much.

In the struggle the fugitive seemed to be about to escape, when a second of the pursuers threw a lariat, which caught him by the right foot ; another came up on the opposite side, and did the same.

His right hand was also caught, and it seemed as if he must now be utterly powerless.

But he continued to guide and regulate the movements of his horse by the pressure of his knees against its side, and with quite as much dexterity as if his hands were free. Although something of a horseman myself, I never saw so striking an illustration of the well-known line spoken of the horse,

"His corporal motion governed by my spirit!"

as this savage afforded:

Those of the pursuers who were hindmost now dashed forward at tremendous speed, and, with a deafening yell, launched their nooses above the heads of their own party, and they fell about the neck of the poor fugitive and that of his horse.

The instant it felt the rope the animal stopped, and the horses of the pursuing party did so as suddenly; in another moment the pretended fugitive issued free from the group of his captors, and, amid wild applauding yells, rejoined his tribe.

As the party wheeled to return, it was led some distance in advance by one of their number, who seemed to be holding the coils of all their lariats upon his arm.

They waited until he was considerably in the advance, and then all started. He galloped toward us in a zigzag, irregular course, leaving the uncoiled lariats strewed here and there along the grass behind him.

The warriors followed, whooping like madmen; but each, as he came to his own lariat, dropped his body along the side of his horse, and, hanging on only by the right heel to the back of the animal, swept the grass with his long hair and fingers as he caught up the lariat, and then, quick as thought, sprang to his feet on the saddle, and proceeded deliberately to restore the lariat to its coil. They approached us standing thus, moveless and erect, with their horses going at full speed, as they had been doing from the first.

They were received with another shout, and at the precise spot

from which they started, the horses came at once to a full stop, and the warriors bounded to the earth.

Now, at another signal from the gray-haired chief of the single feather, a new group of more important persons wheeled out. This was composed of the half-circle chiefs, led by the giant who had surrendered in my favor. They bore all the arms we have so often mentioned, and started at once, at full speed, in a close platoon of ten.

In a moment they sprang to their feet on the saddles, and, clashing their shields and lances together, commenced a most grotesque dance across the backs of their flying horses. The "big chief" led, and they followed in single file, with a slow, bounding step, to the monotony of which they kept time with clashing weapons. They followed each other to and fro to this deliberate step across the backs of their close-wedged horses, and then the speed of the animals was increased, and they sprang forward to a nimbler pace, with an accelerated clatter of their weapons.

Just when I was wondering what new turn this extraordinary exhibition might take, the close-wedged mass of horses spread, leaving each chief standing upon his own saddle. This lasted only long enough for me to see the light between each rider, when at once, as if by some strange magic, every figure disappeared, and when I had time to rub my eyes, I distinguished each warrior running on foot by the side of his horse, keeping up with its tremendous speed.

Now each clasps the horn of his saddle, and then, like a flock of birds rising, they all vault into their seats again, and clashing their weapons together, the horses close once more, and they go on.

I was utterly confounded with astonishment. Had I been suddenly translated to some strange land where necromancy baffled natural laws?

Thick-coming memories of the Far East, with its blazing sands, and the Bedouin Arabs, with their white turbans and miraculous feats, flitted in dim images across my mind.

But the reality of the scene before me seemed even stranger than all that romance had conjured of that marvelous land.

I had but little time left for wonder, when the scene changed, assuming an entirely new aspect.

A party of Albert's warriors, of the same number, now wheeled out from the lower end of his line, and galloped to meet our chiefs with arms presented, as if in the act of charging upon them.

The war-whoop was sounded on either side, and they seemed, from their headlong gait, about to precipitate themselves upon each other with the greatest imaginable fury.

Just before they must have met, the fronts presented were shifted, and they passed each other diagonally, at the distance of thirty paces.

Our chiefs lanced their arrows at the others, who stooped, like birds on the wing, and presented only their white shields in the places which had been filled by their bodies.

The arrows glanced off, and, quick as thought, they were in their seats, and shot at the others, who dipped in the same way behind their horses. Then, when they had arrived at the end of the lists, they turned, and were passing each other in the same manner.

But this time Albert's warriors, instead of rising in their saddles, answered the arrows of their opponents by shooting from underneath the necks of their horses; then they rose quickly, and, before they had passed out of reach, two more arrows had been exchanged between them, as they turned almost square around in their saddles, and shot, like the flying Parthians, behind them.

The object seemed to be to strike each other's shields without mutual injury.

It seemed a rough and dangerous sport, certainly, and I could hardly understand the possibility of their escaping without injury; but it appeared that they did so, for the arrows all glanced from them without wounding any one.

Now, as they returned to meet again, the lance was presented, while the bow swung at their backs along with the quiver.

This seemed to promise, unavoidably, a bloody issue, and I felt a sort of shuddering excitement at witnessing it, for they appeared to be coming together, as the stout, mail-clad knights of the ancient tourney did, at headlong speed. But there were some very essential features of difference in the manner of immediate collision.

The lance was not held "in rest," after the manner of chivalry, but the end of the heft was hugged close to the right side, while the point was elevated to about the range of the breast of the opponent.

As they approached each other, a quick vibratory motion was given to the lance, which it seemed impossible the eyes could follow. The object, of course, was to confuse the guard of the foe, and render him uncertain as to the point about to be struck. This sharp vibration is terribly confusing even to the most trained and accustomed vision. Yet they came together with a heavy lurch of their horses, and the lance-points, met by the prompt shields, were glanced off into the air.

Then party after party, from both sides, wheeled out and joined the mimic battle, until about a hundred on each side were engaged. It was now a most marvelous, exciting, and surprising scene to me.

In the attack, retreat, flight, pursuit, and rally, I witnessed in the highest perfection all that strength, agility, and consummate horsemanship which even my astounded imagination, roused and prepared, by what had been exhibited already, was capacitated, in its bewildered wonder, to expect.

They resembled most, in the airiness of their movements, a flock of sea-birds which were struggling with each other for some favorite prey. They swooped together, dived and parted, but to wheel and strike again in passing; then scatter, but to come together in small compact squads, which dived, struck, whirled, and scattered, but to reunite and strike once more.

I thought the warriors of my own tribe, though not equal to the others in agility, seemed to bear them on before them in almost every collision by the greater weight of their own persons and horses. Though the others were so swallow-like in their movements, and played around their heavy adversaries with such a subtle quickness and serpent-like convolution of movement, I could not help feeling a sensation of dread as I observed how entirely characteristic all this was of my instinctive preconceptions concerning Albert, their chief.

Be this as it may, after the fight had continued for some time, until it was extremely difficult to distinguish whether it was in bloody earnest or not, the parties separated, and my own warriors came toward me bearing the slain; some before them with faces down, laid across the saddle-bows like dead bodies, others dragged by the hands between two warriors, who came on howling as if the legions of hell were pursuing them.

I, of course, experienced at this exhibition of horror, disgust that such a bloody consummation should have been considered necessary to convince me of the prowess of the two tribes.

But judge my astonishment when they drew up in front of my position.

The apparently dead warriors were suddenly imbued with life!

Those who had been hanging in front of the saddles now dropped to the earth and sprang up again, dismounting the riders who had borne them, and vaulted, with a loud shout, into their seats; each one of those who had been dragged along sprang up behind one of the riders, displaced him, and took his seat!

Now the whole array broke up, and I found myself rushing toward the great gate with the rest.

The last scene of these games had made so strong an impression upon me, that I found it impossible to shake it off. As we rode toward the rancho, Old Hicks and Landeville were on each side of me. My curiosity was greatly excited to know what tribe these

formidable warriors were of, and I thought, between the experience of these two old frontier men, I ought to be enlightened.

“Hicks, what tribe are those fellows of, who have chosen Albert for their war chief?”

He shook his head doubtfully.

“I ain’t sure, but it seems to me they must be Cayguas.”

“What!” I exclaimed, with a thrill of astonishment, “the bloody Cayguas? The most ruthless of the southern tribes! I did not know they belonged to the Camanche confederacy.”

“Nor I, before; nor I ain’t sure, cap’en, that these is the same fellows. The only time I ever seed them was in a fight, and then they licked us; but they wan’t rigged then after this fashion, but looked like our darkies here. If they are the same rascals, and find me out, I am a gone case, for I shot one of their great chiefs that time. If I could have one of their arrows in my hand for a minute, I think I might tell.”

“Here is one,” said Landeville, holding up an arrow. “I had the same suspicion, and picked up one of their arrows to look; but I have forgotten how the bands upon their arrows are.”

“The bands are black and red,” said Old Hicks, as he reached for the arrow. “By the Old Harry, it is them! Here they are, black and red, close to the bottom of the feather. The Camanche is only red. These are the infernal Cayguas! Their bows are made of strips of buffalo horn, wrapped with sinews. See the bow of that fellow going by: it is the same; and there, see the black and red paint around the middle. We must look sharp, cap’en.”

Old Hicks had made two very long speeches, for him, and seemed greatly roused and excited by this discovery. Indeed, this was a serious discovery for us all, since their reputation for blood-thirsty cruelty and treachery was proverbially known.

Hah! thought I, Master Albert! you are most happily associated. Your black and scarlet colors, then, have a double mean-

ing! We will see whether the two colors or the one will triumph in the struggle which I feel must sooner or later occur between us.

I now remembered that neither the woman nor Albert had ever mentioned the name of their tribe, nor had it, during all these ceremonies, been once spoken in my hearing. This might have been accident, but it looked much more like design.

I had gone too far now, and had my inherent love of novel positions and adventure too deeply roused to think of shrinking; the very result which had, no doubt, been calculated upon from the first. With almost any probable disparity of numbers, I had still an immense advantage in the courage and attachment of my men, and the character of our weapons.

As yet, I did not know the number of warriors in my tribe; certainly, if all were here present, there were little over two hundred, while the Cayguas numbered over three. Predatory or hunting parties might have been sent out on excursions. However, I now determined, at the earliest opportunity, to possess myself of all such facts.

The first thing, when we reached the rancho, for all of us, was a bathe in the clear mountain stream which passed through the yard. We found our clothes ready at our disposal; but what was our dismay and vexation at finding that, scrub as we might, little of the coloring matter would come off, and we came out only a few shades lighter. At first the men swore most obstreperously at this, but their indignation took a pleasant turn when the doctor said, gayly,

“D—n it, never mind, it will wear off soon, and we shall just have time to find out how a copper skin feels!”

We now resumed the most convenient portions of our old costume, discarding only our heavy boots and shoes, and retaining in their place the fringed leggins and moccasins, which we all agreed in finding the most pleasant and convenient.

We were excessively fatigued, and about to retire for the night, when the French woman made her appearance, and told me that it was proposed by Albert and the other tribes that we should hold on the morrow a grand buffalo hunt. I agreed carelessly to this proposition, and she passed out.

I was waked early from the profound slumber of weariness by the sound of unusual bustle in the rancho, and around it. I found the men all on foot, and, on looking through the narrow port-hole which answered for a window, saw the yard full of Indians, with whom Albert was speaking in a loud tone.

Old Hicks was immediately at my side, and, after listening a moment, said to me, quickly,

“Something has happened, and that ugly Frenchman is raving mad with our Indians; I guess there will be the devil to play now!”

At this moment the French woman came to the door, and beckoned me hastily to come to her. First snatching up my arms, I sprang to her side.

She was dressed in a most extraordinary manner, and carried pistols. She looked very pale as she took my hand.

Though her face was blanched, she exhibited nothing of tremor as she gazed fixedly for a moment into my eye.

“There is trouble this morning!” she answered, to the eager inquiry of my look.

“How? What is it?”

“The Kewanies have struck at us again—have killed twelve of Albert’s tribe, and five of yours, besides carrying off many pack-mules and some valuable horses.”

“Was it a surprise?”

“Yes! The games and feasting of yesterday left the warriors of your tribe sleepy and careless. Albert had appointed them to guard the outer gate, which was left open, and the horses and mules which were grazing outside the picketing, in the valley.

The vindictive Kewanies, who, as you know, once belonged to our new confederacy, were entirely familiar with this spot, and, no doubt, under the lead of the brother of the chief whom I slew, dogged us here, and made their attack just at daybreak, when every soul of us was soundest asleep. They even had the audacity to pass through the gate, and lanced the twelve Cayguas before the alarm was given. On their retreat through the camp of your tribe, they killed five warriors, and succeeded in getting off with a large number of our mules and horses. A detachment of your tribe is following on their trail; and Albert is now in a furious rage, abusing your chiefs for permitting the surprise. We must start at once upon the pursuit; but be cautious!"

"You mean with regard to Albert?"

"Yes. He is frantic now; but come out with your men around you, and be calm until the gust passes. Keep the old man near you. Remember that you shall hear from me if any thing goes wrong. I must be near Albert. You will trust me?"

Her eyes expanded, and a slight flush chased the pallor from her cheek as she pressed my hand slightly, and half turned as if to go.

The men were all looking on, but I forgot this, and, springing forward, quickly raised that small hand to my lips. She withdrew it as quickly, and was gone.

I heard a sound behind me like smothered laughter. I wheeled suddenly to detect the source of this untimely merriment, and no doubt my face must have blazed with angry excitement, for, when my eye met that of Dolphin Larry, his face, which was spread in a broad, brutal, and libidinous grin, instantly collapsed into a pale and hateful expression. My late impressions with regard to this man now took a sterner form, for the half-glare of lust and hate I had surprised in his eye was not to be mistaken.

I determined that he should be watched closely.

The men were all ready and drawn up, awaiting my movements, with their own arms in hand. I beckoned to them, and we issued forth into the yard.

The Indians of both tribes were crowded into the yard in a confused mass, while the particular group addressed by Albert was composed of the chiefs of my tribe, headed by the ugly giant.

As he saw me approaching, our Frenchman, who was raging and raving most obstreperously, turned toward me, and, with a very slight degree of deference yet lingering in his manner, said,

“Sir Chieftain, your tribe have proven themselves unworthy to be warriors. Our enemies passed over their sleeping bodies into our very midst this morning, lanced my brave Cayguas in their sleep, and, as they passed out, slew some of the drowsy women of your tribe. What have you to say, Sir Chief?”

“I have to say, that the Camanches are not women, but warriors! You seem most a woman who stand there scolding like an old wife instead of hastening in pursuit of your enemies. We are ready, sir: what have you done?”

The Frenchman turned ashy white at this, and made a quick movement of the hand toward his belt.

I merely sneered, and, turning off contemptuously, told Old Hicks to order our tribe into the saddle forthwith for the pursuit.

With all my pretended recklessness, I was greatly and most pleasantly surprised that I heard nothing farther from the Frenchman. It could not be that my insulting rebuke had struck him dumb!

Impelled by irrepressible curiosity, I turned my head as I was walking off, and saw that the French woman was speaking with him in a low, eager voice, while, with his hand still clutching the butt of his pistol, he listened to her with a stern, rigid air, still following my receding steps with eyes that flashed murder from them.

She, my good angel, had interposed in time to prevent a serious outbreak on his part.

My men and myself were soon mounted, and then dashing into the huddled crowd, I quickly drew apart the warriors of my tribe,

and had those whose horses had not been carried off mounted and drawn up ready to start.

Albert now bestirred himself as well, and in a few moments rode up to me upon his beautiful black charger, and with the most consummate courtesy proceeded to apologize for his angry rudeness, and then to inform me what steps had been taken toward the pursuit, and how he proposed it should be conducted.

He had left the warriors whose horses had been lost in possession of the rancho as a guard, and proposed that Old Hicks and one of my warriors should go forward as an advance to meet our returning spies, and bring us back the news on their fresh horses, while we should follow on the main trail at less speed. All these dispositions seemed to me wise and proper enough, so I assented without hesitation.

I agreed to part with Old Hicks, because I saw the French woman was to accompany us.

She rode like a young and graceful cavalier, and was armed and habited much like Albert, except that she wore no feathers, but simply a glazed cap upon her head. Her weapons, like his, were pistols, a knife, and the lance. I was surprised that Albert carried no gun.

The extraordinary and voluptuous beauty of her form was singularly set off by this close-fitting dress, and her waved, glossy hair, flowing from beneath her small cap, fell down an ebon veil over the snowy back of the white steed.

Ah, what a strange vision of bewildering loveliness and strength that was!

The warriors now raised a prolonged and mournful howl for their slain, and then, as we all spurred forward, the dismal monody was suddenly changed into a fierce yell, and they struck their shields and lances together.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PURSUIT.

WE dashed off at full speed, while the very welkin rang with their hoarse cries of fury and for vengeance.

Our course was down the middle of the valley. Albert, the French woman, and myself, rode in front. Old Hicks and the Caygua warrior were fast disappearing in the distance ahead.

The valley widened rapidly as we progressed, and seemed to sink deeper as it spread between the mountains, until their cones soared high toward the clouds, and in the early morning their long, cool shadows fell across our way.

Our pace now moderated somewhat, and the woman rode up to my side.

"Sir Chieftain, you did well this morning. Albert is too imperious, and expects to domineer insultingly over every one who is thrown in his way. It is good that you have taught him a lesson. He has learned at last to respect you."

"It does not matter to me what Albert's temper and habits may be. I have my arms, and we are now on equal footing. I will soon teach him his place, and a respect for my rights. But you! will you not tell me, at least, something of yourself? I feel far more interested in hearing about you than in regarding the purposes of your choleric *friend*!"

I emphasized this last word in a peculiar manner, which she evidently understood, for she blushed scarlet, and bent over the white mane of her horse.

In a moment her bowed form was erect, and she turned, looking me calmly and steadfastly in the eyes.

"Whatever may have been my relations to that man, I have taught him not only that they no longer exist, but as well to quail beneath a will sterner and more desperate than his own. But you"—and her eyes brimmed up and her voice slightly trembled—"you should be the last to taunt me with my cruel destiny; for to you, at least, I have been true as friendship and gratitude demanded!"

She brushed her eyes with her fingers, and turned from me with a proud gesture.

But ah! the iron had coldly entered my heart, and I shuddered and clutched my saddle-bow, for I felt as if falling from my seat. The gloomy suspicion which had often flitted across my mind seemed now to be confirmed. She had been the mistress of Albert!

O hell and all its furies, how they raged within me! I clutched a pistol convulsively, for my first impulse was to shoot her and then him; but when I turned my eye upon her, she rode with such a self-reliant air, mingled with meek sadness, as she looked out abstractedly before her, that I felt she was too high and strong to be measured or judged by any ordinary standard of right; that conventional customs and theories could never move or govern the impulses of such a nature.

She was above and beyond them all, peerless in the truth and vigor of her own instincts, and would assert herself pure and true in spite of what had been or might be.

I felt sure now, as I gradually yielded to the sophistry of this reaction of my jealous passion, that, supposing my startling suspicion to be true, there would, in the end, appear full and sufficient reasons why she should once have loved and trusted this cunning monster Albert. That she now defied him, and that he feared and was governed in a great measure by her, was evident. The mystery of their relation had really yet to be developed; and as I looked upon

her calm, white face, in which pride was still struggling with the angel, my wrath all melted into passionate sympathy, and I said, as I spurred my horse nearer hers,

“It matters not to me what your relations to that bad man have been : remember, I am yours with heart and life, whatever may turn up !”

Her cheek flushed, and she turned upon me a look radiant, through her swimming eyes, with gratitude, if not a warmer feeling, and we pressed on our horses to a greater speed.

We were now approaching what appeared a gap or indentation in the mountain ridge, opening toward the southwest. I could see the forms of Old Hicks and the Indian just rising to the comb of what was still the steep acclivity of this break or sway of the mountain chain.

They were pressing up the steep, apparently at the utmost speed of their horses, and looked most like flies crawling hurriedly up a wall. We, too, now diverged from the valley upon their track.

We had first to cross the small stream which coursed at the foot of the mountains, and which was the same that had passed through the yard of the rancho.

The topographical features of this valley reminded me strongly of that fair spot I had christened the “Peaceful Valley,” in which our camp had last been made.

I could well conceive how this little rill might after a while grow into a deep and turbulent stream, and go cleaving its way through rifted rocks, as did that upon the steep bank of which we had hoped to sleep so calmly.

I now remembered the efforts my captors had made, during that blindfolded ride, to confuse me as to the direction they held, and, connecting every thing I had observed with regard to our present locality, I felt a strong suspicion that the rancho of the Frenchman, which we had just left, was situated at the head of that same valley, and that it was from it we were now just diverging,

though the comparison of this little rill and that powerful deep stream impressed me strongly with the idea of the great distance from this point to that.

This was not a little heightened by my impressions of that fearful and weary ride. Be this as it may, we were now hurrying up the steep and narrow trail that led to the indented crest of the ridge over which Hicks and the Caygua had disappeared.

When our panting horses reached this spot, we overlooked an immense undulating area, interspersed with mountain-like hills, covered with timber, and interlaid with open lanes and spreading meadows of prairie. We paused for a moment, and, far as the eye could reach, the same scenery was presented: no human figure was to be seen.

Indeed, an army could easily have been hid among those thick, clustering islands of timber. The prospect we commanded seemed to include some thirty or forty miles, though beyond three miles it was hopeless to expect to distinguish a human figure. Old Hicks could not be that distance off, and, of course, I judged the trail must lead to a devious course among the islands, and we might come upon the enemy at any moment.

We spurred on in the descent, the ex-chief of my tribe and a Caygua chieftain leading the way on the trail.

We had progressed in this way about an hour, when our trail-leaders came to a halt, and seemed confused. When we came up to them, they said, by their gestures, that the trail had spread out in every direction; and as the French woman, who promptly came to my side, explained, the common Indian manner to baffle pursuit had now been adopted.

They had spread themselves on every side to baffle our trailers, with the understanding that they were to come together again at some well-known place.

I knew that Old Hicks was up to all these tricks, and so I urged, through the French woman, that the trailers should rather look out

for his trail, and that of the Caygua with him, than trouble themselves about that of the Kewanies.

It happened that Albert agreed with this idea ; and now our trailers went to work, like stanch and well-trained sleuth-hounds, to unravel the complications before them, and lead off upon the right track. This was no light job, for the trail of Old Hicks and the Indian had to be distinguished amid several hundred other trails, and how this was to be accomplished was more than a civilized head could well understand.

The two chiefs sprang to their feet, and, with heads bent low, they crossed the whole breadth of the trail, closely examining every track, as it seemed.

We paused to await the result, and in a little time they seemed to be satisfied, for they gave a shout of triumph, sprang to their horses, mounted, and dashed off. We all followed.

I asked the French woman if she knew how they were able to distinguish one track from another.

“It is difficult to describe the mode. The eye of an Indian habitually distinguishes a peculiar physiognomy and significance in all the signs and traces about them. This constitutes their literature, and it is impossible for us, beyond a certain point, to apprehend all the meaning of what they read so easily. What are to us hieroglyphics constitutes an expressive language to them, which they learned as they learned to talk, by an unconscious process.

“For instance, one of the first things a Southern Indian notices about a new horse is the form of his hoofs, his manner of lifting them up and putting them down in a walk, gallop, or run. Thus, when he has once seen the track, it is afterward associated with the animal, and he recognizes the one as promptly as the other.

“He will select a single track, and follow it through and among a thousand others, and be able to tell not only when the horse has changed its gait, but as well whether the animal is fresh or fatigued, &c.

"You see that, when fatigued, the fetlocks must drop, and leave slight impressions behind the track, and the overlapping of the hind feet, or the stride, will be less and less. The hoofs will sink deeper and deeper as the body, deprived of its elasticity, comes down more heavily upon them; and then flecks of foam are apt to fall from the mouth of the tired horse; all of which slight signs the quick and practiced eye of the Indian will detect, while his own horse flies along the trail nearly at full speed.

"They very seldom dismount, because they do not find it necessary; but in this instance it required close examination to enable them to get the right start; now you perceive they follow without any trouble. But I thought you were by this time sufficiently familiar with the mysteries of prairie craft?"

"O, I have had some experience, but I find that I have a great many things to learn in the world yet, and it is particularly pleasant, even if I knew them before, to learn them over from your lips."

"Pshaw!" said she, somewhat gravely; "I shall surrender my good opinion of you, and come to set you down as a fool, if you address to me those common-place gallantries. I am sick of any thing that sounds like the hollow-heart mockery of society slang. I came to the wilderness to get out of reach of it, and though I still use it sometimes, it is in a spirit not particularly complimentary to those toward whom it is used. *We* should be friends, and address each other like human beings."

"Most willingly," said I; while my heart leaped up in gladness, for this earnest tone was most happily significant to me. "But I sinned this time unconsciously. I spoke an impulse, not a gallantry; pray forgive the unhappy phraseology."

"You are a man of impulse, and therefore must be forgiven; but do you know that impulsive people, who in addition possess, as you do, great caution, are precisely the most dangerous of all characters?"

"Yes; for when a high-strung and perfect organization, which,

with a sensitive delicacy, responds to all outward presentations of what is exquisite, beautiful, and most holy, learns in the hideous process of corruption to subvert these sacred gifts to selfish ends, then truly does the sacrilegious monster possessing it become formidable just in a precise ratio with the truth and purity of the natures subjected to his diabolical craft."

"True ; and Albert is the most strict impersonation of the monster you have described that can be conceived, with the exception that, since we came here, the lust of gold and slaughter seems to have grown into a predominance over all other lusts, and to have overwhelmed even his subtle caution and tastes ?"

"Then Albert has been beautiful in seeming," said I, eagerly, anxious to draw her out into confidence upon this nice point.

"Yes, beautiful as the golden-haired Apollo, when he won the stars to pause and listen to the eloquent discoursing his fleet fingers made toying with the plectrum on his hollow shell. He was the cavalier of poets, and his life in Paris a heroic ballad ; so knightly delicate, so proud, so high, so pure, he came to me, that, dreaming maiden as I was, my wild ideal veiled itself before him : I adored !"

"You adored ? But why is it that you now hate ?"

"I hate, because this man has profaned the romance which brought us here. He has hideously outraged, in every sense, the poetry, joy, hope—every thing, indeed, which formed the promise of our coming. He has proved himself a rude, beastly sensualist, a bloody and monstrous traitor. He controls these savages because he is the most ferocious and relentless savage of them all. He has not your skill in weapons."

"But you spoke of his thirst for gold : how is that displayed out here ?"

"He had heard of gold mines in this region, and often, when we jocularly spoke of coming here, he alluded to them as the vague legends of El Dorado, and laughed about the ingots with which we should pave the home of our love. I never dreamed, poor fool !

that it was the ingots he was worshiping rather than myself; or, in other words, I learned, just late enough for the heart-ache and an utter change of nature, that the Parisian *roué* had come to claim his patrimony in the western wilds, not as a romantic adventurer, but as a lustful and insatiate miser, who would not only coin his own brain and heart's blood into gold, but surrender his whole being to the savage and beastly propensities which social restraints had heretofore kept within bounds. And even this might have been pardoned, but that he chose to will that I, too, who loved him, should be dragged down along with him into the infernal abyss, and that the glozing courtesy of courtship and the tender seeming of a holier tie should be united in a crushing and diabolical array to move and overbear me to his fiendish purpose!

"I do not know but I might have seen through all this otherwise, and perhaps as soon; but when he dared to collect a harem of Camanche girls around me, it was certainly time for the loving and trusting woman to take the alarm. Then I, too, lost something of the character and delicacy of my sex, for I waked up out of the terrific gloom of such a burial of happiness and life a fiend, a reckless Amazon, and in a few weeks not only fought desperately in the ranks side by side with Albert, but even led him in the fight, and finally saved his life. Since, I have treated him with a cool, commanding scorn, which he can neither get away from nor rebel against. He is determined to claim and possess the gold mine, in search of which you have penetrated this wild region.

"He is jealous of you in every sense, except so far as I am concerned; this his insolent egotism protects him from; for, though he can and does outrage the old compact between us without compunction or hesitation, yet he never dreams of the possibility that I might think of retaliation.

"He hates you because you have a will of your own, and, further, because you propose to interfere with his favorite prospect of possessing the gold mine, which, by-the-way, has yet to be found

by either of you. He hates you, and suspects that Old Hicks will yet enable you to triumph over him in the search. He will always cling to you while there is a prospect of accomplishing this his favorite purpose. Whatever insolence he may exhibit, he will promptly endeavor to make amends for, until you have either mutually failed or succeeded. If you succeed, look out! Whether you succeed or not, look out! He will submit to no division of spoils in the event of success, and his demoniacal hate will strike at the witnesses of his defeat!"

I had no time to reply to this finale to a most interesting *exposé*.

Our horses had all along been moving at a steady pace, and we suddenly heard from ahead a shout.

We had been moving for some time among the islands in a winding course, and it was impossible for us to tell what our direction had been with any precision. We all halted at the shout, and looking forward, I perceived the two chiefs returning at full speed.

Far in their rear I could distinguish Old Hicks and the warrior, pressing their horses up the steep with every demonstration of eager speed. Behind them, in the distance, I caught the glimpse of a party of warriors, who checked up suddenly behind one of the islands as they caught sight of us. It was now clear that a fight was inevitable, and we coolly prepared ourselves for its consequences.

The two chiefs came up at great speed, urging their horses with heels and quirts. So soon as they were within earshot they commenced shouting in their own guttural language, and pointed back with their lances to indicate the direction of the enemy.

I followed with my eye, and saw a single column of black smoke rising through the still, clear air.

"The Kewanies! the Kewanies!" said the French woman, calmly translating their shout. "They bring news of the robbers, and there goes their signal," pointing toward the column of smoke.

"But what could have become of our spies?"

"These fellows have communicated by signal with Hicks and the Caygua, and we must wait until they reach us before we know. Here they come."

The two bolted suddenly into our midst. There was no clamor or noise on their part, but they came like men who bore weighty news. The Caygua joined Albert, while Old Hicks reined up by my side.

"What news, old man? Where are the spies?"

"Scalped! Look there!" and he pointed with his rifle toward the column of smoke I had observed, and slowly swept it over the landscape to the right of our position.

"See! there they rise; two, three, four, five, six, cap'en; more than Kewanies there."

My gaze followed as he indicated, and one after another the six columns of smoke became apparent, the second lower than the first, and so on until the last one could just be distinguished, creeping up under the very edge of the horizon, square to our right. Thus, in a few moments, those dark, ominous pillars stood up like shadowy giants, with their feet upon the hills, and their black, curling brows lowering over us from the clouds, with threatenings. The appearance lasted but for a minute, though it was sufficient to impress me with a shuddering sense of dread. As they shrunk away or were scattered upon thin air, I turned in surprise at the stillness around me.

All faces were uplifted in the same direction, watching in sobered silence these well-understood signals for the gathering of a much more formidable body of foes than we had supposed it possible could have been collected to repel us, for the space of country which they showed to be occupied was large, and each signal smoke told of a new encampment roused.

"That has an ugly look, cap'en."

"Yes, rather; but what of the spies?"

"I came upon 'em all at once, around the sharp turn of a big chaparral. They were all down, with about a hundred Kewanies around them, and under the horses' legs I could see the rascals that had dismounted stooping to scalp them. We were so close, and going so fast, that we had like to have been in the midst of 'em before we could rein up. They yelled, and broke at us. Their arrows came like hail. See here, I brought one with me!" and he held up the bloody weapon, which he showed me had entered his thigh.

"They followed you, and those fellows I saw turn back were they?"

"Yes, it was a mighty cunning ambush; don't think our poor fellows had time to strike a blow. Cap'en, these rascals have cut out some red work for us this mornin'. You must keep your eye skinned, or we'll get 'trapped, and surrounded too."

"How many do you judge they are?"

"From all the signs, there must be three to one of us—may be a heap more."

"Pooh!" said I, with affected carelessness, "that's nothing!"

"No, not on a fair field, but this is ugly ground. Them chaparrals, motts, and lanes are dangersome, since they've got possession of the ground, and know all the crooks and turns, while we don't."

"How far did you get?"

"About three miles from here."

"Ground no better?"

"Worse and worse: lanes narrower—chaparrals bigger and thicker—motts more scattering—and gullies plenty."

"That's bad; but we can drive 'em, any how: only be spry. Tell our Indians about the fate of the spies."

This conversation passed with great rapidity, the warriors, in the mean time, sitting in stolid quiet. Hicks was about to speak to our Indians, when Albert suddenly galloped to my side, lifting his hands with a gesture enjoining silence.

"The old man has told you all? We have sharp work before us. What do you propose?"

"I have marked the places of the different smokes; they are nearly as far from each other as we are from the first. I would have us dash down at once upon the nearest, and trust to our speed for striking them in detail before they can all get together."

"Right! just my plan. I see you know something, sir, about dealing with these fellows."

"As the loss is ours, we will lead."

"Certainly! Speak out, old man!" and, waving his hand to Old Hicks, with a courteous bow to me, he wheeled, and placed himself at the head of his tribe. I did not see the French woman.

The old man, in a loud voice, announced to the tribe, in their own language, the additional loss they had sustained in the twelve of their warriors who had gone out as spies. When he told them how he had seen them all scalped, it was as if a heavy shock of electricity had struck them, and they sprang forward in their saddles, uttering a hideous and convulsive yell for vengeance, which then changed into a moaning howl. Quick as thought, twelve of the minor chiefs sprang forward, with the giant at their head.

At a gesture from me, they paused a moment, while Old Hicks rode in front. They then set off at full speed, amid renewed howls and moans as they advanced.

CHAPTER XX.

THE OLD MISSION.

I FELT that I was in an awkward position, as I had no one to translate for me, and looked around again for the French woman. She was at Albert's side, and nodded to me. I understood, and waving my hand, and giving a loud shout, we set off in a body, myself and men in the lead.

I determined not to blow our horses, and rode at a rapid but steady gait, the advance party careering at full speed. It was with considerable difficulty I could restrain my eager warriors from plunging down the hill after their own headlong fashion, and that I was able to succeed at all gave me considerable confidence as to the hold I had obtained upon them.

I looked back, and Albert was following with his better-trained warriors behind him, riding three abreast, like a veteran troop of Lancers.

The contrast with my own confused troop struck me painfully enough at first, but then I remembered how in the games of yesterday, and in all my collisions with them, I had seen these rude warriors render order out of chaos as quickly as a flock of migrating swallows, and was satisfied that discipline would prove little superior, with its stiff, strait jacket, to the extraordinary alertness and rapid unanimity of their own wild movements and training.

I had little confidence that his control over his tribe, with all his discipline, would last long in the presence of the enemy, and, upon the whole, felt that we should be nearly upon an equal footing in this respect.

It was but a little while before we came to the scene of the massacre of the spies, and there the twelve bodies were stretched, stark and shamefully mutilated. It was a most startling and awful howl our warriors raised when this sight broke upon us.

A number of them sprang to their feet, and, amid mournful wailings from the whole, they proceeded to hide the bodies in the adjoining thicket, covering them with a few feet of sand and leaves. This was finished in an incredibly short time; and when they returned and sprang into their saddles, we went off again, while the vengeful war-whoop rang once more, and like the bursting of a tempest.

There was no difficulty now in following the broad trail of our advance, and I kept the lead simply by dint of hard riding and the superiority of my noble horse.

This I was determined to do at any rate, for I had full confidence in the sagacity of Old Hicks, and felt sure that I should be warned in time; and it was necessary that I should be in the lead when we came up with the enemy, or lose cast as a war chief.

Since we started from the scene of the massacre, the warriors had been too furious to be controlled, and all that had been left me was to keep ahead and guide the torrent.

On looking round, I saw that most of my men had fallen behind, and only Landeville was within reach, while a group of eager warriors closed upon my rear.

On, on we rushed, as if the ghosts of slaughtered warriors urged our frightened steeds. The ground was becoming more rough and dangerous every moment, the openings between the thickets yet narrower, the danger of ambush and surprise more imminent.

But Old Hicks was ahead, and I felt safe, for I too had now caught something of the frenzied excitement which raged through the mass I led, and was nearly indifferent to all but the one thought, precipitating myself upon the enemy.

I had lost sight of Albert and his Cayguas, and, indeed, did not

care where they were ; although the image of the French woman flitted across my brain like the tender gleam of a spring sunrise, yet it was swallowed up momentarily in the red glowing of the fiery sky that now made my horizon. The raging lust of destructiveness was fairly aroused, and nothing but blood ! blood ! could the thirsty eye-balls see ahead. The very clouds were incarnadined, and even the green leaves were flushed as we went by. This horrible passion once aroused, and all the tender seeming of our life grows hateful, and is gulfed—lost, in the fiery vortex we are rushing through, and in which earth and heaven are at once confounded.

The trail now led us into one of those lanes or openings of the prairie, between two long motts of scattering timber ; for a quarter of a mile down it we had an unobstructed view of over two hundred yards in width.

We wheeled into it most unexpectedly, and at the further end perceived a huddled party of Indian riders approaching toward us at full speed. My first idea was, that it must be a troop of Kewanies ; for, though I thought of our advance guard, yet I did not perceive Old Hicks, and Indians look very much alike.

But they did not halt on perceiving us, and in another moment the veritable and unmistakable form of our veteran guide came forward from the rear to front, and uncovering his white, streaming hair, waved his cap to us.

Before we could answer the greeting, and quicker than eye could wink, a large party of Indians bolted from beneath the scattering timber of the motts on each side, and swooped at our little detachment as if it was intended to meet lances through their devoted bodies in the shock.

This was, no doubt, the trick by which the other party had been annihilated ; but our veteran and his chiefs were too much on the alert for its entire success this time.

They saw our approach, and rode on steadily without looking round, or giving any indication that they were aware of what was

coming on each side. Old Hicks quietly replaced his cap, and seemed to tighten up the reins of his horse.

I shuddered as I saw the two parties close upon them with a tremendous clash, and supposed them to be utterly exterminated; for, as we thundered down at the same instant upon the confused *melée*, the saddles of our warriors all seemed to be empty.

But what was my astonishment, as we closed, to meet the smoke of the rifle of Old Hicks on my face, and perceive the two parties of the Kewanies recoiling in terror, many of them transfixed by each other's lances, which had missed their intended aim too suddenly to be diverted by the headlong shock, while our warriors as suddenly swung themselves up into their seats, from which they had dipped at the instant of collision, and, wheeling, charged furiously on either side upon their baffled and retreating foes. Old Hicks, by spurring his horse forward in a few tremendous bounds, had missed the collision entirely, and his rifle and pistols, with mine, and the overwhelming burst of our unlooked-for force, completed the panic, effectually turning the tables upon the Kewanies; for, almost as promptly as they had expected to annihilate our little advance, they themselves were unhorsed and scalped, all to about twenty at the further end of their lines, who went off with the speed of panic terror. The warriors were down, scalping the fallen, when Dr. Martin urged his horse to my side, with his face expressing a perfect ecstasy of comic glce.

“Quick work we made of that nice little job, cap'en!”

“Yes; but come! we must catch those fellows. It won't do to lose sight of them. Hicks, order the warriors to their saddles! come!”

And we went off again at full speed as the fugitives were disappearing round the turn of the opening. Myself and men, who, of course, had not troubled ourselves about the scalps and plunder, thus obtained the start considerably.

The main body soon followed, however, yelling like bedlamites,

while they bore aloft upon the points of their lances the reeking scalps. We were already fully avenged for our losses, for about thirty Kewanies had been slain. They evidently had been so intent upon surprising our guard, that they had not perceived our approach at all. A small detachment of our warriors remained behind to take charge of the horses and other plunder, which Indians no more dream of leaving than they do the bodies of their slain.

The bounding pulse, the turgid throbbing of my temples, the red, unnatural glow about me, had passed away with the fierce crashing of this collision, as the surcharged cloud relieves itself of its gathered electricity in one loud, angry burst.

I now saw things as they really were, and, for the first time, as my caution returned, remembered that Old Hicks, with the advance guard, had stringent reasons for returning in such haste, apart from the presence of the party we had just scattered, of the existence of which he was clearly unaware. I looked around to beckon him, and saw that he had already urged his horse ahead of the warriors for the purpose of joining me. I told Landeville to keep a sharp look-out for ambuscades, and slackened my pace a little that he might come up.

In a moment or two he was at my side.

"Where is that infernal Frenchman?" gasped he, almost breathless with anxiety and speed.

"I do not know. He diverged from our course suddenly, and I have not heard of him since."

"Hope he ain't a d—d traitor! I saw the Indians about two miles ahead, and they seemed to be about five hundred; you'll be right among 'em presently, if you follow them fellows."

"But what can we do, old man? We can't back out, and with our boys, we are strong enough to hold them at bay and give them a good fight until that cursed Frenchman comes up, *if* he intends to."

"That's the point ; I don't believe he does."

"Well, we must go ahead ! The French woman is with him ; she'll make it all right somehow, whatever he may intend."

"Believe she will ! She's a brave gal, if she was raised on frogs."

"But your horse must be tired ?"

"Yes, a little leg-weary."

"Hadn't you better go back, then, and mount one of those we took from the Kewanies just now ?"

"No," said he, sternly, patting the neck of the animal with affection at the same time, "I shall die by old Ball, now I've got him again."

I saw it was useless to remonstrate, and could only urge him to spare the animal as much as possible, and let his friend Landeville take his place in the spy service. This he consented to on my insisting that I needed him near me every moment for advice and as a translator.

We had now lost sight of the fugitives, and, closing up with our men, I sent Landeville, who was admirably mounted, on ahead.

The ground was becoming more rough and dangerous every moment. We had formed a very imperfect idea of it from the landscape, as it appeared to us from the ridge on which we stood when first overlooking it. Then it seemed a vast plain, broken with regular and mountain-like undulations, with smooth valleys between, while both hill and valley were dotted with motts, and inlaid with strips of meadow and prairie. Now these smooth valleys were broken up by deep, abrupt, and impassable gullies, into which we were at any moment liable to be precipitated, without time of warning to change our course. The motts were varied by dense chaparral thickets, and the smooth undulations rose into steep, rugged hills. So we found the enchantment distance lends the view dispelled !

Hicks now warned me that we were close to the spot from which he had seen in the valley below the large body of Indians.

He prudently advised me that I should await the arrival of our warriors before charging down upon such a force ; but I felt that every thing depended upon following up the panic which the fugitives would carry with them, and determined to enter the camp as nearly as possible in the rear. I turned, and saw that the Indians were only a few hundred yards behind.

“ They will get there in time to back us ! Charge, boys ! ” and on we rushed over the sharp turn of the hill. Such a scene as was presented !

Below us was a long and apparently level valley, about the fourth of a mile in width, which was literally swarming with a black, feather-bedizened hive of maddened warriors, rushing to and fro, in and out, crossing and recrossing, in the most inextricable confusion, as it seemed.

They had evidently just heard the terrible news we had sent them by express, and now I knew I had been right.

Down we urged with a ringing shout, right toward their midst, for, beyond doubt, it was the rumor of our formidable rifles that had caused this flurry among them.

They saw us coming down, and for a moment all was still. In this moment half of my party fired their rifles, and fell back. They had measured our small force, and, quicker than thought, sprang forward to bear us down in a single charge. But now the reserve delivered their fire with great steadiness, at less than thirty paces, and emptied a saddle for each ball. The mass recoiled with a shudder, which reached its utmost extreme, and then, before it reacted, we had time to give them a few pistol shots ; but only a few, for on came the returning surge with an overwhelming rush and roar, which left us blindly struggling, without the opportunity of using our weapons.

I thought all was over, when the shock of the charge of our faithful Camanches from behind caused most opportunely another slight recoil, which gave those of us who were still in the saddle an opportunity to use our remaining pistols with a good effect.

We were gaining ground, for our warriors fought with singular and most ferocious desperation. We now had time to reload in squads, and rush to the front of the fight; each time as we did so they gave back more rapidly. In the midst of all this I missed several of my men, but whether they had been unhorsed, killed, or taken prisoners, I could only conjecture. With all the advantage of our arms, it was for some moments a dreadful fight, and I saw warrior after warrior among the foremost go down.

At last I grew desperate: the red light began to come before my vision again, and, shouting to my men, we made in a body one more charge to the front. We had not time to load our rifles, but fired our pistols, clubbed guns, and rushed on. We were well seconded by our Indian allies, and this time the mass, which had borne down upon us so heavily, broke up in a twinkling, and was scattered in every direction.

Our Indians yelled like fiends incarnate, and rushed after them. All was pell-mell and confusion, striking here and there; groans and howls mingled with good, home-bred English curses. Our foes were driven back; though apparently so at first, not by any means entirely routed. They had scattered in a momentary panic, but soon, with characteristic velocity of movement, presented a retreating but firm front.

This was certainly triumph enough; less than two hundred to five! But I felt convinced that they would never have retreated, and left their slain upon the field, without a more desperate struggle, but that they felt sure of some re-enforcements so close at hand that they would be enabled to return and recover them before our warriors could have time to go back and scalp them.

I looked around eagerly. There was no sign of Albert and the Cayguas approaching. I now felt that there was nothing left for me but to urge the fight on to a complete panic on their part, which would meet the re-enforcement they evidently expected, and recoil upon them, or to retreat at once, and run the risk of being

overtaken on our tired horses by an overwhelming force, and be cut to pieces without mercy.

I determined at any risk upon the first, and, rallying my scattered men and the warriors with loud shouts, I urged them upon the pursuit. My men responded promptly, and those of them who were left closed up around me. I felt that several were gone, but who they were exactly I had not time to ascertain. We were weary, and nearly exhausted; but such was our confidence in our weapons, that now, since the flush of excitement was over, we were sure that we could drive them before us quietly, without much further fatigue.

The Indians came up gallantly, led by the grim ex-chief, who seemed to wield within his giant frame the energies of a dozen common warriors. After a short but desperate struggle, the rally of the Kewanies was broken up again, but they retreated, Parthian like, fighting as they fled.

This flying fight was one of the anomalies of prairie Indian warfare which would most profoundly puzzle the warrior of civilization.

The main body of the Kewanies was flying in good earnest down the valley, which rapidly widened. The mob was panic-stricken, and could not be brought back to face our rifles; nor even, indeed, the last disgrace of all, to recover the bodies of their slain, which plentifully strewed the retreat.

But a small force, principally composed, as seemed, of the chiefs, lingered behind them nearly a mile, and seemed determined to dispute with us every inch of ground. These heroic braves, who were really inferior to us in number, appeared to have resolutely dedicated themselves to sustain the honor of their tribe, after having in vain endeavored to rally the flying mass, with sullen sternness fell back to sell their lives as dearly as might be.

They fought with singular doggedness. We soon closed up within pistol-shot of them, and at this distance their arrows told as well as our balls. Both parties of us were going at the utmost

speed of our horses. My men would load and fire, and fall back, and then our Indians would rush to the front. While we were loading, a deadly shower of arrows would be exchanged, and when we rushed to the front again, they would all dip in their saddles, and return our fire with arrows shot from beneath the necks of their horses, with quite as much precision as when they sat erect.

The result was, that we killed more horses than men ; and when a warrior's horse would fall, he would extricate himself, and quickly spring behind the nearest rider. When a warrior was killed or desperately wounded, they caught him as he fell from the saddle, threw his body across the neck of a horse before a single rider, and one of those who had lost his horse would leap into the vacant saddle.

Once, when one of our balls told mortally, the warrior sprang convulsively and fell to the earth. They halted instantly, although we were so close. Two of them stooped from their saddles, caught the body by the hair, and started again, dragging it for some distance along the ground, until they could lift it between them, and then it was thrown across before the saddle of one.

We suffered severely in this desperate fight. Almost every man of my Rangers was wounded as well as myself, and warrior after warrior of our tribe fell from his saddle, to be snatched up and borne on with the heady current of the fight.

There was no yelling now, but the work of slaughter went on in a somber stillness, only broken by the ring of our fire-arms, the twang of bows, and the dull, thundering trample of our horses over the yielding sward. There was something inexpressibly terrible to me, now that my brain was no longer congested, in this stifled and bloody storm of human passions rushing so ruthlessly through the still air, over the green plain, beneath the calm smile of God's blessed sunlight !

I felt that it was sheer murder, a brutal and monstrous massacre, thus to follow up these gallant and noble warriors who had

so sublimely dedicated themselves to redeem the honor of their recreant tribe, and I cast my eyes about me eagerly for any accident that might be offered as an excuse to withdraw from the pursuit.

I have mentioned that the valley spread rapidly from the narrow plain in which the fight commenced ; now, since the pursuit had continued through several miles, it had widened into a great prairie off to the left, while we rushed along the edge of a small stream which coursed by the foot of a range of steep hills.

We had for some time been passing on our left between us and the stream, a straggling chain of motts, which pushed out at irregular distances into the prairie ; now, suddenly, as we turned one of these, I saw what startled me quite as much as a sheeted and gigantic ghost would have done, had it stalked solemnly between us and our flying foes.

The gray, dilapidated walls of a huge square building rose suddenly out of the wilderness upon my astounded vision. What could it mean ?

I forgot to fire my rifle, and an arrow from the Kewanies tore up the back of my left hand.

This was enough of an awakener ; I fired, and was going by the broad and moss-covered pile, as if it had been a common cliff, for this wound had maddened me, and I forgot in an instant all my yearnings for peace and mercy.

I had drawn my knife for the first time, and was spurring my horse on for an immediate and savage collision with the Kewanies, when Old Hicks rushed out from behind the walls, around which he had unquestionably ridden by turning out from our course, and, eagerly catching at my arm, arrested me.

"Let the poor devils go ! There is something wrong inside the ruins of this old mission. We had better take up a position here, any how, or maybe we'll be whipped yet."

"What do you mean ?" said I, half bewildered by the sudden-

ness of the interruption : "look there !" and I held up my bleeding hand to him, urging my horse at the same time to get away.

"Never mind, cap'en, I'm worse hurt than that, a heap ! *She's in there !*"

"What ! the French woman ?"

"Maybe so. It's certain some woman is in there in that tumble-down pile, and in distress too, for I heard her cry as I came past !"

"Great God ! a woman ! Halt ! halt !" and I shouted at the top of my voice to recall the men, who were now far ahead ; while Old Hicks urged his horse forward with the same cry in their own language, and, succeeding in getting ahead of them, turned back the warriors.

In a few moments they were all clustered about me, awaiting in silence my commands ; for the success of the late battles in which I had led them had produced a profound impression, and I saw that they were now willing to obey me without question.

Through Old Hicks, I represented to them the necessity of occupying a defensible position, before we were charged upon by a stronger force in the open plain.

Leaving Old Hicks to settle this matter as he might, I darted away in my impatience around the square of the building.

Before many paces in the front, I found the ground impassable for my horse, on account of the many huge scattered blocks, which lay in what appeared to have been the front court of the building.

I sprang to my feet with the strange feeling uppermost that the stale incidents of the Old World romance, amid antique ruins, were to be most ridiculously repeated here in the wilderness, amid this moss-grown heap, which looked on the inside of the square as if these great rocks had been heaped together by some eccentric humor of the flood, and remained to the present, with the gathering stain of ages deepening on their seams.

But now, as I stepped lightly through this venerable wreck of

Jesuit rule two centuries ago, I heard a stifled cry, which seemed to come from its deepest recesses.

I thought I recognized the voice, and sprang forward with all the vitality of rage and fury my life contained.

There was a distinctly-marked trail of blood, which guided me over the confused mass of stone blocks, until, leaping from one to the other, I had passed through several broken arches that let in the sky.

I now paused for an instant to listen, but all sounds had ceased. This puzzled me much; for, though I had twice before, in my wanderings, observed the massive and solemn ruins of these old Catholic missions standing beside some river, amid the silence of the vast southwestern plains, yet it had so happened that I had never penetrated them, half because I did not love to shudder in the cold air of such somber wrecks, and half because there had been too little time at my command. I therefore knew nothing of their internal structure which could guide me, now that the trail of blood had suddenly disappeared, and nothing was presented but a mingled heap of tumbled arches and broken walls.

There might be dark vaults underneath all this pile, for it was natural to suppose that the monks of Spain had transferred such essential features of monastic architecture in the Old World to these strongholds of the spiritual empire they dreamed they were founding in the New.

It might be that she, whose voice had so startled and roused me, had been dragged into one of these, and was now beyond the reach of aid, until, perhaps, *it would be too late!*

I shuddered at the thought as I gazed anxiously around me for a clew to the pursuit. Finding none, I stooped despairingly to examine the mossed stones for some trace, however faint, of passing footsteps. I soon found where the thin green rime of centuries was broken. Following this hint for a few paces, I discovered a single drop of blood.

This was enough to assure me that I was right, and with a trembling terror I followed the slight marks as fast as my eye would guide me, stumbling up and over the stone blocks without noticing any thing else, for the nearly unbroken height of the outer walls threw down such a shade as caused quite a twilight here. Suddenly I heard above me a coarse English voice. I paused, looked up, but could see no one.

I stood at the foot of a long partition wall, the top of which had long since fallen down, and here it had sunk into a deep gap to about ten feet above my head.

The stones which had fallen formed a sort of irregular staircase, by which I easily mounted, so as to overlook the gap.

It must be from the other side of the wall that sound came. I sprang up the heaped rubbish, pistol in hand, and when I reached the top, great God! such a scene as I saw!

I looked down upon what had been a long and lofty chamber, the paved floor of which was comparatively free from rubbish, though the roof was of course gone.

Just below me was a most unexpected group of three living and two apparently dead persons.

The French woman, around whose limbs and body a lariat was securely coiled, occupied the foreground, as she lay helplessly stretched upon the floor. Her dress was partly torn from the upper portions of her form, which were exposed in their white, chaste beauty.

The lecherous brute, Dolphin Larry, was kneeling behind her head, which he had just succeeded in enveloping securely with those portions of the dress which had been torn from her bust.

Near him stood a Kewanie warrior, who was leaning listlessly on his lance, and looking carelessly down, as if with the eye of a connoisseur, upon this proceeding. A short distance from him the bodies of two warriors of his own tribe were stretched, apparently dead.

It now first flashed across my mind that this wretch Larry was

one of the men I had missed since the first desperate collision with the Kewanies at the head of the valley, all of whom I had, of course, supposed to be slain.

His face was almost livid with passion, and his distended eyes shot forth the red glare of lust, as they were fixed in a sort of frantic gloating on the charms revealed before him. I saw him flash his eye savagely toward the impassive warrior at his side, and then bring his right hand suddenly to a pistol in his belt. The left hand was lifted at the same time as if about to be brought down to profane, with its beastly clutch, that snowy bosom before him.

My aim was already between his eyes, and I fired as quick as thought.

The report was double, and, as the traitorous ruffian sank back, the arm still grasping his assassin pistol, fell heavily upon the pavement by his side, while the warrior sprang with a death groan into the air, and dropped clashing down, with his head upon the body of his murderer.

"Hah ! hah ! both dead !" I laughed, as my brain reeled under this fresh accession of excitement upon my wounded and exhausted frame.

I remember attempting to clear the gap of the intervening wall at a single desperate leap, and then that all was darkness.

When I awoke, it was by an energetic douse of water, dashed with hearty good-will from his greasy old cap into my face by the gallant Old Hicks, upon whose venerable form, stooping over me, my eyes first re-opened.

I sprang quickly to my feet, and attempted to reascend the pile from which I had so lately rolled ; but Old Hicks caught me quickly round the waist.

"Stop, stop, cap'en ! all's right ! the boys have gone for her, and you see we are all here to take care of you both. Come, be still a minute, and she'll be here !"

The sound of the old man's soothing voice had scarcely passed

away, when I saw several forms issue, as it appeared, from the unbroken wall, and approach us. Then I had only to have gone on a few paces further, and I should have found a passage through, was the first thought that crossed my memory; but the French woman was now at my side. Her torn costume had been adjusted modestly as the circumstances permitted, but her face was frightfully rigid and pale; besides, it was streaked with blood, which increased the ghastly effect. She was followed by several of my men.

She took my hand in her cold grasp, and said, with the feeble attempt at a smile upon her wan lips,

“Good *capitaine*, you look ill; you must suffer me to nurse you again.”

The solemn calmness with which this was spoken, as contrasted with the terrible scenes through which she had just passed, impressed me as the expression of a sublimity of self-reliant will and strength that I had never before witnessed under such appalling circumstances. Coming out of this dreadful scene, she had spoken first, not of herself, but had addressed a courteous common-place to me. I was deeply moved, and could have caught her to my arms, and kissed, in tender ecstasy, her life and my own away; but then the men were about us, and, what was really much more formidable, there was something too white and awful in her presence now for tenderness.

“Ah! it is you who much more need to be cared for now. Men, let us bear her from out this dismal den.”

Those of them who were least hurt came promptly to lift her in their arms; but the grim chief, perceiving their purpose, made a gesture to his warriors, who had now crowded closely around, and several of the stoutest sprang forward, and, pushing my feeble men aside, promptly formed a litter by gripping their hands. Others laid her upon this, and they soon bore her over all the obstacles into the open air, not far from the edge of the stream.

Those who had gone ahead had already spread a couch for her

of buffalo robes upon the grass. Water was now brought from the stream, and she was copiously bathed upon the extremities, and then well rubbed by the hands of her willing servitors.

She had by no means lost her consciousness, and, as I stood beside her, directing what should be done, she frequently opened her dark, mournful eyes upon me, which gushed over with a subdued and dreamy luster. The true-hearted brother of the wretch Dolphin Larry was the most eager and assiduous of all in his attentions to her, though he was himself badly wounded.

Seeing that she was doing well, and only needed a few minutes' repose, I walked back, feeble as I was, to the mission ruins, that I might measure more accurately with my eye its depth, for I was completely puzzled to understand how it could be that the purposing ravisher had not heard the sounds of our fight as we went by, and become alarmed. But when I perceived now, what I had before been too much excited to take note of, that the building was near three hundred feet deep, I could well understand how he should fail to hear through the immense thickness of its walls the rattling of artillery even, though all his senses had not been so entirely possessed with the hot congestion of unbridled lust.

We found, on examination, that there was fine grazing for our horses between the mission and the river, where they would be out of danger from surprise, for the ground was defended securely on three sides, one the river, another a long mott, and then the mission, while our camp would occupy that which opened out upon the prairie.

I determined to remain here and await the course of events patiently, for nearly all of us were badly hurt in one way or another, and it was necessary to know something more of the intentions of Master Albert before we could venture out upon the prairie with any safety again.

I accordingly gave the order for camping ; but, before this could be carried into effect, it was necessary to pass through the noisy

and mournful ceremonies of burial, in honor of the slain warriors of my tribe. These were not by any means unnecessarily prolonged, and though there was the due and usual howling, the bodies were soon transferred from across the necks of the horses of their bearers to a quiet grave within the shadows of the neighboring mott.

Our horses were now turned loose, and all the preparations made for the morning meal, for which we now felt a voracious relish, as we had tasted nothing since the night before. We first dressed our wounds, in the simple but most magically effective manner of these tribes, with cold water and the leaves of herbs, which were promptly gathered near us from the prairie or the mott.

Our simple meal, of pounded venison and parched wheat, crushed between stones, was soon dispatched, and every one now felt more like repose. All my men were more or less wounded, and so excessively fatigued that a repetition of our memorable capture might easily have been effected but for the presence of our more tough and abstemious allies, whose whole training had been calculated to fortify them against wounds, starvation, and all physical ills.

They kept watch while we all slept. I slept all the afternoon and night, and did not wake until sunrise. Fortunately, I had, before going to sleep, bathed my body thoroughly in the stream, and had succeeded, spite of their prejudices, in persuading my men to do so likewise. Hicks and Landeville did so without any persuasion, for their experience had taught them a thing or two. We had then rolled our dripping bodies in blankets and buffalo robes, and went through a profuse sweat while we slept. On waking, we all plunged into the stream again, and came out to resume our costume, and feeling almost as vigorous as ever, in spite of our wounds.

The Indians had built a close tent of buffalo robes and poles over the sleeping French woman. When she came out she looked pale and languid, and at my persuasion went up to the turn of the stream to bathe. She came back again with beaming eyes, and looking greatly refreshed.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BURNING RANCHO.

WE had heard nothing from our courteous ally, the Caygua chieftain, and as it was altogether unsafe for us to attempt to move in our present crippled condition until we were either able to take care of ourselves, or were certain of effecting a junction with him, I determined to remain quietly where we were for the present.

So, having made the dispositions for the day—among which were a party of hunters and one of scouts—I joined the French woman in a walk toward the ruins, which we proposed to explore fully during the morning.

She now assumed toward me a more stately, distant, and masculine tone than at any time previous during our intercourse. I felt that it was delicate and natural under the late circumstances, and walked on by her side, feeling precisely as if I listened to some stern and chivalric comrade recount his adventures since we parted, in his own curt and characteristic phrase.

She made me entirely forget her sex, and we talked carelessly about the indifferent matters of our present position until we reached a pile of the great blocks of stone which were heaped in the front court of the mission.

Here we seated ourselves opposite each other upon two blocks, and she continued, in the same quiet tone, the topic we were at the moment discoursing of:

“We are safe enough here! I agree with you that we could

whip a thousand Indians in such a position, unless they attempted to starve us out, which, by-the-way, they would never have the patience to do."

"Undoubtedly! But what have we to expect from Albert?"

"Ah! that is the question! All I know can be told in a few words, for he does not condescend now to make me his confidante. It was with the view of discovering, if possible, his intentions, that I separated myself from you in the first place, and stuck so close by his side. Soon after your party was out of sight in the pursuit of the Kewanies yesterday morning, Albert turned off from the trail, and halted upon the top of a high ridge that commanded a view of your course for a considerable distance. He pretended to be watching you; but I knew better; and, in confirmation of my suspicion, in a few moments a Caygua spy, whom I knew to be a daring confidant and tool of his, came urging up the hill at full speed, and so soon as Albert saw him he left my side to meet him. I felt confident that this was for the purpose of mystifying me. After a short consultation, Albert returned and represented to us that the spies of your tribe were mistaken, in face of the fact that a Caygua had gone with Old Hicks, and that the enemy was really toward the northwest.

"I suppose that the fact is, the jealousy of Albert was roused with regard to you, and he had sent out his scouts in the direction of the more distant smokes, for the purpose of finding the enemy first and fighting him without your assistance, supposing that you would be thrown into confusion in the first collision, from the want of knowledge, on your part, of the language of your tribe, and that he would triumph through the perfect familiarity with the tongue, and entire command, through the discipline of his own tribe, which he possessed. We accordingly set off, under the lead of his spy, toward the southwest, in a direction almost at right angles with your own. We had not proceeded more than four miles when we came in full view of a body of Indians which we judged to num-

ber over a thousand, and, in addition, we could see small parties constantly joining them from the north. They, too, had perceived us, and it was too late for retreat. I was convinced that they were not all Kewanies; and, from every thing that I could gather, I believed that a coalition of several strong tribes had been formed for the purpose of our destruction. This had, undoubtedly, been effected by the revengeful brother of the chief whom I slew!"

"What is the history of this feud, by-the-way?"

"The Kewanies, as you have heard, once belonged to the confederacy Albert has formed for the purpose of wholesale robbery and plunder. The war chief was a wild, ferocious young savage, who particularly attracted Albert from a congeniality of instincts, and they became quite intimate. The young chief was constantly at the rancho when not off with Albert on hunting or marauding expeditions, and was always to him a welcome guest under any circumstances.

"Though a young man, he was the most famous brave among the southwestern tribes. He was the best rider, shot the most unerring arrow, drove the most deadly lance, was the most subtle and cunning trailer, was the most tireless and revengeful foe among all the wild chivalry of the plains. Albert loved him because he was strong, lithe, cunning, and ferocious like himself."

"The selfish brute forced you into the presence of his mate constantly, of course?"

"Oh yes! He never dreamed the savage could have any thing other in his nature than the thirst for blood which burned in his own veins. The young chief began to make himself offensive to me by coarse demonstrations of passion that were not to be mistaken. I complained to Albert, but he only laughed at me. Then I determined to take my defense into my own hands, and once I resented a rude importunity of the savage by striking him across the face with the flat of this dagger, which I have almost always worn.

"He went off in a terrible rage, taking with him all his warriors. For months we had not heard of him, and I supposed that we were to be forever free of his presence.

"He would, no doubt, have slain me in his wrath, but that Albert came up at that instant. For a long time nothing was heard from him further than that he still joined Albert in his plundering expeditions, but would not come to the rancho.

"I had at first been very cautious about going outside the picketing, but this was now quite naturally forgotten, and I resumed my old habits. The chief, who was perfectly familiar with them, rushed upon me, with all his warriors, while riding alone, disarmed me suddenly, then bound and carried me off to a distant hunting-ground of his tribe. There you found me.

"I had used the common artifice of pretending to be conciliated gradually, for the purpose of obtaining more liberty of personal movement, for I was at first very closely watched. Bad as my acting was, the unsophisticated chief was almost beside himself with joy, for he loved me with a sort of hyena ferocity, that was positively terrible, and amusing too.

"In the mean time, the spies of Albert were scouring the plains in every direction in search of some trace of me, while I believed, being deceived by the lying chief, that Albert himself was a prisoner, having been captured, while hunting alone, by a hunting-party of the Apaches, who, with their accustomed audacity, had struck down their lodges among the mountains, about a day's ride from where we met.

"It was a detachment of the Kewanies that chased your funny little doctor into camp. They had on that day, for the first time, discovered the practicable mode of access to that beautiful valley in which they came upon him.

"The news of your presence, and the desperate fight, reached my ears in spite of the precautions of the chief that they should not. So soon as I had obtained a clew to the direction and dis-

tance of your camp, I determined to escape. It was not at all uncommon for me to go along with the other women to a small spring for water. That morning I determined to attempt my escape, if ever, for I thought I should be able to reach you across the mountains in time to warn you of the intended attack. You know the rest. You can now understand how the loathing so pent up should have expended itself even in indignities to the body of the wretch after I had killed him."

"Yes; all that was mysterious to me in that scene is now cleared up. But to return to your narrative of Albert's late doings and your own."

"Well! that distinguished person had succeeded most effectually in getting himself into a scrape; for his spy had been deceived, as a junction of several camps had occurred while he was returning with his report, and the number he had seen and reported was not much greater than ours.

"We could not run, and it was utter madness to attempt to fight. It happened that we were near a chain of heavily-timbered motts. We fell back into a narrow meadow, defended on three sides by motts, and, as it was easy enough for us to retreat into either of them if we were pressed, and elude pursuit, the enemy did not immediately attack us, but surrounded our position, as nearly as the character of the country would permit.

"The motts prevented the line being made entire. We were drawn up in the middle of the meadow, and a force nearly treble that of ours awaited a short distance in front the slightest movement on our part which indicated the attempt to communicate with you.

"They were aware of the fact that you were somewhere near, and the sending off a messenger to you would be the signal, if they saw it, for a general attack. I felt sure they only waited for the Kewanies to come up on the rear of our position, and determined somehow to effect a communication with you."

"I sallied out with a small party, as if to invite a skirmish, and managed frequently to brush near the edges of the motts, with the intention, if possible, of gliding into one without being perceived. They accepted my challenge, and sent out a party of about the same number to meet me.

"During the fight, which I took care should happen near the edge of the mott, I got into it unperceived, and made off through the timber. It was an exceedingly rough and difficult way, but I finally succeeded, after many narrow escapes, in getting past their lines.

"I remembered nearly the position of the first smoke, and felt convinced that you must be engaged with the Kewanies somewhere near it, so I made in this direction."

"Now for your meeting with that wretch, Larry!"

"I had often observed this fellow of yours gazing at me with an expression that displeased me; but, as I did not fear him, I only thought of it with contempt and disgust.

"I had crossed this stream, and, coming all at once round the turn of the mott upon this extraordinary pile, I was gazing up at its walls with curiosity and awe.

"My horse was going at full speed, and, as I turned the corner of the square, came suddenly into collision with this party, Larry and the three Kewanies, who were riding close abreast, and at the same speed.

"The shock hurled myself and horse to the earth. Stunning and unexpected as the event was, I did not forget my pistols, and before they had recovered from their surprise, had shot down two of the Kewanies.

"When that traitorous monster, Larry, recognized me, he burst into a hideous yell, and sprang upon me before I could use my knife.

"He tied me in an instant, taking care to secure my knife first. The Kewanie assisted him, but with evident reluctance.

"The sound of your firing was now heard coming in this direction, and the wretch, seizing me in his arms, bore me to the place in there where you found me. The Kewanie also carried the bodies to the same place.

"I at once understood what I had to expect from this fellow, for his eyes told that too plainly to be mistaken. The horses were now brought round, and are yet concealed in these ruins, or in the motts yonder.

"I made an appeal to the Kewanie, whom I knew well, when the two returned. Though he was a most ruthless wretch, and a great friend of the chief I had killed, he was touched by it; and when Larry made his purpose evident, he gave him sternly to understand, by gestures, that he would protect me.

"The libidinous monster raged and threatened in vain; the warrior was firm.

"When I heard you going by, I screamed with all the power of my lungs, in the hope that you might hear and be arrested by my voice.

"The brute had now become so excited that he forgot every thing, and, after various attempts to stifle my cries with his hands, he at last tore away a portion of my garment, and bound it about my head. This was a precaution as necessary to the safety of the Kewanie as his own, therefore there was no interference on his part. But the brutal fiend knew that he would interpose as soon as you were safely past.

"He was too much excited to know that you had stopped, and now you know all the rest. He shot the Kewanie to get rid of him, just as you shot him. It is unnecessary for me to tell you how hideously loathsome all the details of that infernal scene are to me!"

"Yes, yes! it has happily passed now. We will not dwell on it again. But you have left Master Albert in a pleasant predicament! He has, no doubt, by this time, experienced something of

the consequences and delight of treachery. The tables have been fairly turned upon him, for he is himself precisely in the same scrape he intended I should fall into while counting upon his support !”

“ True ; I do not pity him much. I am not sure that his purpose was entirely treacherous ; indeed, I hardly think that it was ; for, though he would gladly have had you defeated, and have taken to himself all the glory of rescuing you, or of the contrast which his own success would have furnished, yet I do not think that he wished to have your party cut to pieces, for it is a part of his plan to make use of you in reaching the Gold Mountain. If he has managed to escape from the ugly position in which I left him, it will be almost a miracle.

“ I do not care myself, one way or the other, a great deal about the result.”

“ Then you no longer love him ?”

“ Pah ! no ! You must be getting sentimental. I told you that once. I hate him as I hate hell, with all its bitterness and evil ! Yet it would not be pleasant to me to witness the death of the man whom I have once loved trustingly ; who, though he has wronged me infamously, is at least sacred in my memory as associated with all that is enchanting, wild, and beautiful in my young dream of love. I could kill him myself, but not see others do it !”

She bowed her head with an expression of deep humiliation and agony.

Oh, how sublime she seemed to me now, and how I yearned to tell her of my worship ! Now I would have trusted her, though earth and heaven told me that she lied !

She could kill him herself, but not see others kill him ! Ah ! the heroic sternness, yet true and womanly delicacy that speech conveyed ; what a tale of bitter wrongs, of proud and uncomplaining endurance, it expressed ! I was so much moved that I feared I might commit myself by saying or doing something which would,

in her present mood, seem ridiculous, and rose hastily, proposing that we should proceed to explore the ruins more fully.

She led the way, and, with the exception of the room with its silent and bloody occupants—which we both avoided entering, with a shuddering aversion—we explored nearly the whole of the accessible passages, chambers, vaults, &c., of the extensive ruin.

We found that there were deep and roomy vaults below, which might easily harbor a large body of men, should they choose to select this as a place of concealment.

In the course of our exploration we discovered the horses. They neighed when they heard our voices or footsteps, and on following the sound, we soon came to a wide descending passage, at the bottom of which we found the animals. Their eyes glittered in the darkness as we approached, and they all whinnied eagerly. The poor animals were nearly starved. They were too far below the surface to hear, or make themselves heard.

The beautiful animal which the French woman had ridden broke away the instant we came in view, and rushed to her, making the vault ring with an affectionate neigh, and only stopped when it had rubbed its head against her bosom.

We led them up to the open air, and never did thirsty and starving prisoners give more lively demonstrations of joy than they, as they rushed, with neighings, headlong toward the river, with their heels every jump or two flying into the air.

The French woman was greatly delighted at the recovery of her favorite, and we were returning to the camp gayly chatting over this pleasant incident, when suddenly a Caygua warrior, all bloody, and nearly falling from his saddle, went by us at a slow, dragging gallop, and reined up in the center of the camp.

“News from Albert!” exclaimed the French woman; and we both ran on to hear it from the tottering messenger.

“That poor fellow is Albert’s spy!” exclaimed she, as we pushed through the crowd of warriors that had thronged about him to hear the news.

A most pitiable-looking object he was, as he clung to the bow of the saddle to keep himself from falling, while the blood dropped slowly over the edges of his moccasins, and his foaming horse leaned its nose against the ground to supply the support which its shaking knees refused to give.

Two arrows were sticking in his person, and several in the body of the wretched horse. It required no prophet to tell how desperate and terrible the fray must have been through which he had passed to reach us.

He had only time to reply in a few feebly-uttered sentences to the eager questioning around him, when he fell, along with his horse, both apparently dying from loss of blood and exhaustion.

I, of course, understood nothing of what had been said ; but the stunned and motionless silence which fell upon all around was more fearfully significant than any words could have been.

The French woman extricated herself from the crowd, and walked slowly to join me where I stood a little apart. As she approached me, I saw that her face was white as death, her features rigidly contracted, while her large round eyes blazed with a fierce and gloomy light. She spoke with great deliberation, but in a voice somewhat sharpened by the effort to be calm,

“Albert has been killed !”

“As we feared !”

“Yes ; he was completely surrounded by an overwhelming force ; five or six of the mountain tribes have come down to join the Kewanies in breaking up our confederacy and rancho, and in exterminating us. The Cayguas are either scattered or cut to pieces, and these mountain robbers are hurrying now to burn down our beautiful home. Captain, you will help me ?”

“You should not doubt that while I have life.”

“I did not. We must have vengeance, and prevent this infernal consummation !”

“Well, my men are refreshed. We will mount at once.”

"At once! and thank you, good *capitaine*," she said, with a trembling voice, as she took my hand and pressed it in hers; "one more blow for the memory of Albert, as he *was*, and I am done with him forever."

She turned off quickly and walked toward her horse, which was still grazing with a famishing eagerness, unconscious of the new trial so suddenly awaiting its faithful endurance.

My men crowded around me to hear the news, some portion of which Old Hicks had already communicated to them.

We were gathered apart from the mass of the warriors, and our originally small party looked lamentably reduced by the loss we had suffered of three men.

Poor Thompson was buried far enough away beneath the drooping moss of that old live oak; Dolphin Larry had just paid the penalty of his brutal lusts at my hands; and Wicklife, the brave fellow, had disappeared in the late fight with the Kewanies.

It turned out that Gallagher, whom I had missed and supposed to be lost too, had only been detained in the rear of the running fight by the crippled condition of his horse, which had been severely wounded early in the affair.

We now numbered only eight of the original eleven, nearly every man of whom was wounded, and some quite seriously. But they were the choice of all; the best fighters, the most faithful, and in every sense reliable.

Gallant fellows! They looked in poor condition for a renewal of the scenes of yesterday. My heart rebuked me at the thought of proposing a new and perhaps more formidable enterprise to them in their haggard and crippled state.

I felt the warm flush of gratitude and pride rise to my forehead, when, in spite of all, they, to a man, cheerfully, and even enthusiastically, responded to my wishes, and separated promptly to bring up their horses from the prairie.

Our Indian allies were not quite so ready, and, indeed, it was

not until the French woman galloped into their midst, and urged them in ringing tones, and a language with which they were familiar, that they showed much disposition to obey my summons as a war chief, and mounted their horses once more.

They were evidently a good deal cowed by the late hard fighting and this disastrous news.

In fifteen minutes all was ready. Gallagher had replaced his wounded horse with one of those rescued from the vault, and the Caygua spy—who, on the copious application of cold water, had recovered from his swoon—was mounted upon another, and rode between two stout warriors, who held him in the saddle. Now we were off from this strange old ruin, leaving it reluctantly, as we had found it unexpectedly.

With all the sudden horrors attending our introduction to its venerable presence, we had yet found it a pleasant haven of security and rest amid the stormy and treacherous surroundings of our present condition.

We took our course as directly as possible for the rancho.

The Caygua had now so far recovered that, as we moved along at a slow gallop, the French woman gathered much more of details from him. The fight had been a most bloody and desperate one, but had not commenced in earnest until about daybreak this morning. Albert had made several attempts to escape with his warriors through the motts, but, finding himself completely surrounded, had at last been brought to bay, raging like a wounded panther.

He drove them back on all sides at first, but then, as any advantage was gained in one direction, they poured in with such overwhelming numbers from another, that he was literally exhausted with slaughter, and, as a last forlorn hope, ordered the spy to make an attempt to cut his way through and reach us.

It was in seconding this attempt by a desperate charge that the spy saw him fall from his horse, and the Cayguas give back as if

flying in every direction. As he was struggling desperately to get through, the yell of triumph arose which indicates in battle the death of a formidable chief; the attention of those with whom he immediately contended was distracted, and he got off, covered with wounds, into the mott. He lay there for some moments concealed, and in that time heard loud cries and shouts, which indicated on their part the intention of going at once to the rancho to burn it down, and utterly to destroy the treacherous league which had been formed in the heart of their country, under the lead of a white man, whose object was to get possession of their sacred gold mines.

He started off, leaving all one tremendous uproar of outcries and confusion. Happening to come out on the same side with the French woman, he crossed her trail, and had followed it in.

With these explanations, the case looked gloomy enough for our quondam chieftain, Albert; yet the prowess and subtlety of himself and his Cayguas had so impressed me, that I could not, for the life of me, realize that all was as bad as this story represented.

Some quick and daring maneuver had been resorted to after the spy left, which had undoubtedly modified the disastrous character of the event.

I suggested this idea to the French woman, but she only shook her head. She knew more than I could; she had seen too surely to doubt the fatal odds against them, and the certainty of their destruction, in the event of their being entirely surrounded.

She would have urged our moving to their rescue at once, so soon as she had been able to rise in the morning, but for the certain conviction that all was over long before. The coming of the Caygua at all, had surprised her far more than it had me.

Old Hiaks and the grim chief, who, by-the-way, had lately formed a sort of sympathetic cronyship, had now gone ahead as our spies and advance.

We necessarily moved with less rapidity than usual, for our horses were fagged and many of us wounded.

The French woman and myself rode together. She had recovered her composure ; and, turning to me suddenly, she asked me how I accounted for the unexpected presence of Larry at the mission, so far in advance of me.

This was just the question which had so frequently been puzzling my own mind. The answer was by no means clear to myself. I made it, though, as I conjectured the truth to be, and found afterward, through a wounded Kewanie who was taken prisoner, that my conjectures were not far wrong, even to details.

“The only explanation that occurs to me with regard to this fellow’s conduct is this : Since that scene of your first night in our camp, after you had killed the Kewanie chief, when I threatened to shoot him in the event of a repetition of a coarse suggestion he had made with regard to the disposal of your person, the fellow has been surly and restless. While we were in camp at the rancho, I observed him to be peculiarly inquisitive with regard to the language of the tribes ; other slight, though insignificant, things occurred to keep alive my distrust and watchfulness over his movements.

“I knew he hated me, and was on the watch to do you mischief. During the pursuit and fight with the Kewanies I lost sight of him. I have no doubt that, during our desperate collision with them in the valley, he deserted, having learned the necessary words, and surrendered himself a prisoner.

“I think he supposed we would be cut to pieces, and shrewdly conjecturing the direction Albert had taken, offered his services as a warrior if they would send him to join the other tribes, knowing that this move would bring him nearer to you.

“The Kewanies, finding themselves hard pressed, were glad to send off a suspicious ally to where he would be in safe keeping,

particularly as his rifle would aid their own messengers for succor in fighting their way, if necessary, to the other camp.

"So, no doubt, he was sent off, with the three warriors about him, whose business it was to see that he did not prove traitor, and, as well, to bring succor back with them."

"I do not question that your meeting was purely accidental. Both of you were equally surprised by the unexpected apparition of the old mission ruins. You came so suddenly together because all your senses were absorbed in the astonishment; your eyes were probably upraised, and, it may be, your mouths were all agape, or else the collision which did occur would never have taken place between persons so trained to the nicety of sense necessary in, and peculiar to, prairie warfare."

"Your conclusion is not particularly complimentary, but is, as it appears to me, not less the true one for that."

"I think you may safely claim the distinction of having been the first person in all this weary wilderness who has suffered martyrdom through the organ of wonder."

It was not long until we reached our old trail, not far from the mountain gap which led into the valley of the rancho.

Here our spies reported the traces of a very large body of horsemen passing through. They estimated their numbers at over fifteen hundred. This was appalling odds for our small and crippled force to meet; but we had calculated on a desperate venture, and it was too late to turn back now, had we been disposed.

We pushed on, but with greater caution, for fear of a surprise or ambush. There was nothing of the proud alacrity which had heretofore characterized our movements in the advance we were now making, and I grew moody.

It seemed almost like the turn-out of a hospital of the wounded to lead a forlorn hope; I felt depressed in spite of myself, and the slow, monotonous tramp of our horses sounded like a funereal march.

The French woman felt this general depression ; indeed, we all felt alike, though no one exhibited the slightest inclination to turn back.

We kept on in a dogged, ominous silence, through which we could hear with painful distinctness the pantings of our weary horses.

I have always observed that a body of men moving upon an enemy in such a mood, if they ever can be brought to meet the collision at all, are terribly formidable, for they precipitate themselves into the conflict with the sullen fury of despair, which reckes of nothing but the fierce work of blood in hand.

A conflict of this kind is always marked by unmitigated ferocity, and is always looked back to by the survivors as to an awful dream of terror and of blinded struggle.

Such was the character of the murderous fight into which we soon found ourselves precipitated.

When we came in sight of the rancho it was blazing high, the flames now and then vaulting quickly above the dark volumes of smoke which hovered over it. A black mass of warriors swayed to and fro tumultuously about the base of this red column.

This was all we saw. We spurred our wearied horses into furious speed, and in another moment burst, in silence, but with a deadly volley, into their midst.

I remember few particulars of this ferocious fight. It is all a maddened chaos to me, through which I raged and struggled with the rest. One form was in my eye, and one purpose nerved my arm. The French woman must be guarded—must be saved !

My little band clung together, and followed my movements like machinery, and I followed hers. She seemed possessed of the demon of slaughter. It was awful to see a frail and gentle woman so possessed !

I thought, from her recklessness, that she seemed to court death. This did not surprise me, and I determined to disappoint her ; for I wished her to live for *me*.

The mass of our foes had at first given back to our sudden charge ; but the panic soon reacted, and it closed crushingly around our small force. Now, amid the ring of our last pistols, the death-groans of the slain, the anguished yells of the wounded, and the hoarse yells of our triumphing enemies, I saw the French woman unhorsed and fall.

My knife was out, and I was striking wildly over her prostrate form, when, with a burst of light in which my brain seemed to have exploded, I went into outer darkness.

CHAPTER XXII.

A WILDERNESS HOSPITAL.

I do not know what else occurred ; but when I waked to consciousness again, it was with the gleam of a camp fire in my face. I was as much confused as if I had really, as I first supposed, opened my eyes in another world.

The large fire at first dazzled my eyes too much for me to distinguish any object beyond, where all was pitchy blackness.

The silence was profound, except the heavy hum of breathing, which seemed to indicate the presence of many sleepers. I attempted to turn my head, but found myself powerless. I closed my eyes upon the dazzling light as a relief.

I now attempted to move my limbs, but found that I had no control over them, although they were evidently not bound.

The fearful thought flashed upon my confused mind that I was dead, and that this was the red gate of Avernus, at the portals of which I was powerlessly awaiting my summons to appear before the ruthless judges.

I struggled long with this phantom terror, until, within the stillness, I heard the beating of my own heart, and then the strong consciousness of being and living resumed its ascendancy, and all my life came back once more.

I now gradually accustomed my eyes to the strong light by opening them slowly, until they had adjusted themselves to the bright influx. The nearer objects gradually defined themselves ; but that which instantly arrested all my attention was the form of Albert, whom we had supposed to be slain.

He sat leaning erect against the stem of a tree. His classical and sharply-chiseled face looked ghastly pale. His eyes were wide open, and gleamed steadily into the darkness before him, as if he were searching with unwinking scrutiny its fathomless depths.

I was profoundly startled at this sight; but there was nothing ghost-like in it, and somehow I felt not altogether unprepared to see him.

What did startle me was, that he was here again to haunt *her* life with his abhorred presence. I did not think or care as to the possible agency he might have had in rescuing me from death. It was as her tyrant, still alive, that I cursed him in my heart.

This feeling was so predominant, that, for the moment, I forgot to look whether *she* too had been rescued. I now cast my eyes eagerly around in search of her, but the range of my vision was necessarily limited by my position. So far as the light reached, or I could turn my eyes, the ground was closely covered with sleeping forms of the Caygua warriors. All that was left me was to lie still in helpless astonishment. There was the veritable form of Albert before me; he could not be a ghost! and those sleeping forms breathed rather loud for shadows.

In an hour or two my quondam Frenchman began to nod contagiously, for I soon found myself following suit, as nearly as the condition of my spinal column would admit.

I believe a weary man, who saw a tiger crouched before him, ready to spring on his slightest movement, would go to sleep from sympathy if the monster nodded drowsily.

Be this as it may, I went to sleep again, and did not wake until about noon of the next day. Some kind hand had spread an awning of skins above my face.

The paralysis had in some measure left me. I could now turn my head about, and move my limbs slightly. The smouldering ashes were before me, and the sleeping forms all gone. The strong sunlight showed me that I was stretched near the foot of, and fa-

cing a high cliff. A small grove interposed between me and the abrupt, glittering rocks.

I turned my head with difficulty, and gazed around me. Gradually the scenery became familiar. I looked down the line of the bluff before me, and soon my eye was arrested by the faint, blue curling of smoke. I at once recognized the smouldering ruins of the rancho.

It was less than a quarter of a mile distant, and the charred posts of the stockading still showed here and there the glow of fire, and the quick leap of tongue-like flames still gleamed around their crumbling stumps. There was no human being in sight, and I was just wondering whether I had been left to die alone, through the tender mercies of my friend Albert, when a low groan upon my left caused me to turn my head that way.

The French woman lay stretched about ten feet from me, with an awning of skins, like my own, over her face. She was not fairly awake, and was groaning and muttering in her disturbed sleep.

I felt a year's life renewed in my veins as I recognized her form. Just now came the heavy, trampling rush of horses from behind, that seemed to threaten me with extermination. I was attempting, in nervous terror, to spring up, when the sounds ceased, and Albert strode deliberately in front of me, making a low and formal salutation as he saw me to be awake.

"Tough times we've had lately, Sir Captain! Rough country, this, for sober citizens!"

"But I thought you had been killed?"

"O yes! undoubtedly! I have been killed a number of times, but I have always managed to come to life again!"

"A lucky person you are. But can you explain to me the meaning of this trouble I have in making use of myself as I used to do?"

"Yes! yes! When you made that headlong, stupid charge into their midst, the Indians gave you a friendly tap on the back

of the head, which possibly made you see something more than stars, just to remind you of the dangers of familiarity. They would probably have carried their illustration to the ridiculous extreme of taking your scalp, but that I and my Cayguas came along at the instant, and furnished them with a more exciting amusement."

"Certainly you and your Cayguas are very interesting and long-lived persons; but that fact does not at the present render me at all more comfortable. Can you tell me what has become of my men, and how the French woman is?"

"As for your men, four of them are killed outright; the others are all crippled like yourself. The French woman, as you call her, is in the same predicament, and lies there not very far from you. You and she would be an interesting couple to make love to each other just now!"

This last was spoken by him in such perfect unconsciousness as a good joke, that I could scarcely refrain from a smile. But this was dreadful news enough. My party cut down from eight to four, and as to who they might be my very soul was agonized.

The pompous tyrant had now walked off without giving me an opportunity of inquiring.

I loved all these men; but there were those among them whom I could less afford to lose than the others. Old Hicks was my first thought. But there were none of them in view, so that I had to endure the suspense.

His Indians, in the mean time, took possession of my mutilated body, and carried me through a vapour or sweating bath, under a blanket, accompanied by such rubbing as would have done justice to Turkish operators in the same line, and then followed by a plunge in the cold water of the mountain stream, into which they rudely dipped me for an instant.

This roused me up surprisingly; but I was still unable to walk, or even to turn my head much. I saw at a distance several other

persons undergoing the same discipline. These, I took for granted, were my men, though they were too far off for me to speak to them. In a few hours the warriors of my tribe came up at full gallop, and, dismounting, gathered around about me as I lay stretched upon the earth.

The poor fellows looked as if they had seen hard times, and their ranks were greatly thinned.

They made a litter of their hands, and brought Old Hicks to me, that he might translate. It was a warm and earnest pressure I gave to the hand of the brave old man, for I had greatly dreaded lest he might prove to be among the missing.

They had a lamentable tale of loss to tell, for the last affair had been to us all a disastrous one. They had lost very heavily in their attempts to rescue me particularly. All my men were now gone but Martin, Landeville, and Hicks.

I groaned in spirit with a deep, bitter agony. This mad, infatuated passion of mine was costing me terribly. Brave fellows! they had risked and lost all in following me through these wild struggles! And to what end had all this unquestioning devotion been wasted?

This was a question I found great difficulty in answering. I loved the French woman, and had followed her strangely fatal fortunes reckless of all else! I had sacrificed my men to her, and possibly my own life! And who was she that had exerted such disastrous influence at the expense of so much to us all?

The mistress of a brutal adventurer! A discarded leman! What else was she, according to her own confession? And here five loyal men had sold their lives for her of whom they never heard before, and knew nothing!

What evil and mysterious charm was this she wielded? for they seemed to be possessed by it as well as myself, and even these wild Indians shared the spell. All of us had followed her without question; as in a dream, we had done the maddest and most un-

heard-of things, yet without our special wonder when they were passed ! all because her gracious smile had repaid us, and her reckless daring gone before our own.

It was so novel and so wonderful to us to see the warrior and the woman thus united ! I cursed her and blessed her in the same breath ! She had been the fiend, the evil genius, yet the angel of my life !

What was strangest of all, I had never heard, even from Old Hicks, in the face of these heavy sacrifices, a word of complaint directed to her as the cause of all. My warriors had never murmured, but had followed blindly on, with instinctive chivalry, in the lead of beauty, gentleness, and daring !

I was touched by the expressions of entire allegiance on the part of my warriors, which were translated to me by Old Hicks. He was very feeble, and could only speak in low, trembling tones.

He told me that they had been following up the flight of the mountain tribes, and had taken much plunder. The unexpected charge of Albert, following my own, had driven them in complete rout, though they had succeeded in destroying the rancho, and had come near scalping both the French woman and myself. Yet they had been thoroughly panic stricken and routed.

In spite of my bitter thoughts, I asked eagerly after the French woman. Old Hicks told me that she was dangerously wounded, and that it would not be safe for me to see or talk with her now.

I was obliged to be contented with this, and, feeling greatly fatigued by the exertion of talking, I desired to be left alone.

It will probably suffice for me to tell that for ten days I was entirely unable to use my limbs, and that, during this time, Albert was most assiduously courteous and attentive, though instinctively distant, for he necessarily felt that I hated him. He offered no explanation of his escape, and I asked none, though I afterward understood, that, instead of being hurled from his horse, as his spy had reported to us at the mission, he had leaped to the ground

amid his enemies, and, stooping quickly, stabbed the foremost of their horses in the belly, which brought them to the ground. His Indians had pretended to be flying, and the enemy had raised those shouts of triumph which the spy heard while they rushed headlong on their apparently flying foe. This was what the cunning Albert and his Cayguas had desired; for, when their rash and confident enemy closed upon them, they all followed the example of their chief, sprang to the ground, and commenced stabbing horses. This soon produced inextricable confusion, and gave Albert time to make good his retreat into the timber. The baffled foe had then attempted to reach the rancho for the purpose of plundering and destroying it, if possible, before he or myself could arrive to the rescue. We have witnessed the result. This maneuver of stabbing the horses is of no unfrequent occurrence among all nations who fight on horse-back principally, but it is always a last, desperate resort, and is generally successful.

There was a solitary tent of buffalo robes and poles a few paces distant from me, which formed the principal object of interest in the narrow landscape I could command. In it I knew *she* was living! How dangerously ill I could only conjecture, for Albert merely answered me in unsatisfactory monosyllables when I asked him of her condition, and I saw no one else but Indians.

One after another my men came forth, pale and ghost-like, to visit me. It seemed miserably forlorn for us; only four wounded and feeble men in this wild wilderness left to stand beside each other.

The bearing of Albert became every day more insolent, and I conjectured, accordingly, that the French woman was growing worse. I had previously been denied any sight or knowledge of her condition, except such as I could gather from the men incidentally.

They told me that she was very badly hurt, and that the Cay-

guas were nursing her with great tenderness. Whether she would survive or not was a matter of great doubt.

Old Hicks hobbled to my side every morning, and Dr. Martin managed, with the assistance of the warriors, to present his mutilated person now and then. His mirthfulness was yet indomitable; he joked and laughed as merrily as ever.

It was a somber time I had of it those ten days! I wished a thousand times that I had been killed outright, rather than be thus excruciated by suspense. Albert now came every day to chat with me, and seemed to exert himself to play the agreeable, but it was always so marred by a presuming assumption of superiority that I only hated him more heartily than ever.

I had now recovered sufficiently to be able to walk feebly a few paces. The first use I made of my recovered strength was to reach the tent of buffalo hides that had been so long the chiefest object of attraction and interest to me. I entered it by the aid of a lance, which supported my tottering steps. The French woman was stretched upon a couch of skins: she was very thin and feeble. She turned her head languidly as I entered. Her pale, thin face flushed as she saw me, and she slowly lifted her cold and death-like hand to greet me. It trembled as I touched it, and I sank down by her side.

"Then there is hope that you may live! That brutal traitor has lied to me, as usual, whenever he has spoken of you."

"Ah! you—and you will be well again soon, for I feel, now I have seen you, that I shall be strong again to-morrow: you, too, must be well now, if it be but for vengeance!"

"Yes, yes, I shall soon be well now; I have been more depressed by his lies than by my wounds." Oh, how my heart leaped with joy, and how beautiful the world seemed!

CHAPTER XXIII.

PHILOSOPHY OF SAVAGE LIFE.

QUITE a little settlement of buffalo-robe huts had now grown up, for the wounded warriors of both tribes had as well to be provided with shelter as ourselves.

So soon as we were able to use our limbs, the different members of this primitive hospital—for we numbered nearly a hundred in all, wounded in the late desperate fights—could be seen slowly hobbling toward the stream I have mentioned as between us and the foot of the high bluffs for their daily, and sometimes, as in my own case, more frequent baths.

It seems that the highest truths in many departments of human investigation, which it has taken our complex civilization many centuries to arrive at or approach, are recognized and acted upon intuitively in the savage or elementary forms of the social state.

The savant travels an enormously circuitous route of precedent, through books and musty parchments, within the walls of the cell or studio, and, after all the weary way, has only picked up, amid the ashes and bones of centuries, a fragmentary particle or two glittering with the deathless light of Nature's truth: the savage lives in her immediate embrace, and the old mother smiles always benignantly upon her simple children. Thus they grow strong upon the giant's food, drawn from her own warm bosom, and act the prophecies of science—live in the real of its bright though sickly visions!

The great geniuses are, and have been, essentially savages in all

but the breech-clout. They arrive at truth by much the same processes ; they equally scorn all shackles but those of the God-imposed senses, whether corporeal or spiritual, and, with like self-reliance, rule all precedents by the Gospel as revealed within themselves !

It would be a disquisition filled with highest interest to the true philosopher, and pregnant of rebuke to the scientific pedant, which would treat knowingly of the many facts in the daily life of the savages of this continent, which show them to have unconsciously anticipated by centuries the slow and turgid revelations of science as taught in our schools of civilization.

To say that they are far enough ahead of our philosophers in the knowledge of the laws of physical life and the processes of inductive reason, would sound like a monstrous assumption ; but it is, nevertheless, a true one.

The genuine savage is a living demonstration of simple mathematics, such as the stylus or type has never yet perpetuated to the dreary confusion of the pale, smoke-dried victims of "the midnight oil."

Within the certain range of his excursions, he is a better naturalist than any of them all, from the old Brahmins, or even Aristotle, down to our later naturalists, so far as an absolute intimacy and sympathetic community with the life of wild animals is concerned.

The habits of these creatures, wild and simple as themselves, are familiar to them from childhood as those of their own mates in their own tribe.

They know perfectly all their ingoings and outcomings ; what changes the revolutions of the sun, moon, and seasons produce in these, or upon their passions and affections, their uprisings and lyings down.

They are equally familiar with all the changes in size, plumage, pelage, &c., produced by age and the seasons.

In a word, though they can not, with Cuvier, read you the Natural History of an antediluvian world, with its fossil remains for a text, yet they can, within the limits of their own excursions, furnish you with more accurate details of the world as it is than Cuvier and all his peers.

They can puzzle the profoundest optician by their powers of vision, and set at naught his subtlest theories ; so with regard to the sciences of the other senses.

In each of these they nearly equal the most extraordinary of the animals who excel in a particular sense, as the eagle, the cat, the hound, &c., and yet have the advantage of combining all.

How immeasurably superior such life to the prosy vegetation of the civilized man ; and what amazing discoveries such organizations would bring to the field of his investigations, aided by his mechanics !

How is this life perfected, and such organization perpetuated ?

The savage is, most innocently, a profound master of the laws of life. He has never taken his degree at Edinburgh, or traveled to the Continental schools ; yet his simple habits are so far above the *practical* wisdom of learned professors as to enable him to look down with patronizing pity upon the technical and ponderous stupidity of all the colleges of medicine and surgery in the world.

The object of medical science is to preserve as well as restore health. We have, in civilization, the most stupendously pompous appliances for the perpetuation of such knowledge as we possess, in all the departments of this science.

The Indian laughs to shame all this silly parade ! Long ago he humbly asked of his ancient mother Nature that she would teach him, and she is always gracious, except to those who, like our learned professors, attempt to *teach her* ! She answered his prayer. She told him to look upon the wild birds and beasts around him, and he might read her written revelations of the laws of life and health.

The Indian was humble, and obeyed. He took his knowledge of the laws of life from them ; and when we grow wise enough, we too will wipe out our dusty records, and take not only from the same source, but as well from him our science.

As he is more powerful, more long-lived, more active, more enduring of hunger, and thirst, and the vicissitudes of climate and season, than any one of the inferior denizens of the wilderness through which he ranges, so will those bold men of civilization, who adopt his humble, unpretending science, outstrip, in physical development, the feeble slaves of precedent by whom he is surrounded.

Simplicity and common sense guide the savage. He lives in certain conditions of the elemental world. To these, whether hot, cold, or temperate, he must adapt himself, his own constitution, and that of his children.

All these vicissitudes have to be faced, whether or no ; so he commences with accustoming his child to them from its birth.

He plunges it into the water, and teaches it to swim before it can walk. He gives it simple food, accustoms it to endure hunger and thirst ; its life is to be a predatory one, so he habituates it to the use of mimic arms so soon as it can handle them. Its games are all such as will fit it for the war-trail on the prairie or the mountain foray.

The child grows up a warrior without knowing it. When it receives a bruising fall in hunting, or is wounded in their dangerous games, like the frog when bitten by the spider, it has its prompt remedy at hand, runs to the nearest stream, and lies down in it until the pain is relieved, or else in harmless mimicry of pedantic nostrums, snatches some fresh herb from the earth, that, with its natural coolness, answers nearly the same purpose of withdrawing the inflammation.

So he grows up his own physician ; and, if more serious disease overtake him, which is seldom, abstinence, the steam sweat of hot

rocks with water poured on them under a blanket, followed by a plunge into the cold stream, relieves him.

He is his own surgeon, too ; and if a limb is broken, he takes it to the nearest running water, steeps it there until the inflammation has subsided, binds it up with innocent herbs in some soft, fibrous bark, returns to the cold water as often as the inflammation rises, and is well in an incredibly short time.

So with wounds of every description. A single warrior will bear wounds of a character and number that would kill three white men, and yet, by the aid of abstinence, his immense recuperative energies, and such simple treatment as we have mentioned, he is up again and in the saddle before the corpse of a white man would have been fairly in the way of decomposition.

This system constitutes, as I conceive, the true adaptation of "means to the end." We do not wish to make our children, in civilization; professional robbers certainly, but we must and do desire to make them men. Physically men in every sense of hardihood and endurance, they are best fitted to become ethically so in every sense of good citizenship.

The border white man, in his contests with the savage, soon acquires from the collision many of his habits, and appropriates much of his wisdom "on compulsion" of the same condition and necessities.

I have mentioned how promptly Old Hicks and Landeville, who were the most experienced in Indian modes, adopted my suggestion of the bath and sweat at the mission ruins. Those of my party who were less experienced proved more difficult to persuade ; yet what prompt and magical results followed ! We were invigorated and refreshed after our bath the next morning, in spite of all the wounds, bruises, and fatigue we had endured.

Now, in our hospital camp, we had been subjected to the same simple processes, and with like extraordinary results. I am convinced that three out of five of all that were wounded, including

myself and the remnant of my party, would, without hesitation, have been consigned over to death upon the list of the "mortally wounded" by the majority of scientific surgeons; yet it seemed we were not mortally wounded; for, one after another, by the constant use of the invigorating tonic of a cold bath, we came forth again restored to the free use of our energies.

It looks as if here, again, "out of the mouths of babes" in learning, our doctors were confounded; for, since my return to civilization, I learn that a rude and half-savage peasant of Germany has astonished the world by the miraculous cures he has performed, through the energetic application of these same primitive, nature-derived laws, to nearly all forms of disease, as well as accidental injuries.

Who shall say now that the boasted and inflated learning of civilization may not, even in the healing art, be set at naught by the dark-skinned and brecch-clouted being it has so patronizingly designated "the untutored savage?"

Thus it was that, amid all the dangerous blows and blood-lettings, we came through at last—a feeble remnant—but once again securely on our feet.

Our freedom from all shackles upon the physical life was of course attended by a like release from moral bigotry. The savage has his morality, and a stern code it is, too.

He, happily, has no such subtleties as the doctrine of original sin or predestination to puzzle his brain; he falls back upon the common or unwritten law of human rights.

This is the broad foundation of his code, the features of which have been slightly modified by traditionary usages, which are purely derived from the patriarchal system, which is evidently the truest and most ancient of human institutions.

As is always the case where this institution prevails in its original form, the government is a pure theocracy. Among the southern Indians there are few religious observances or ceremonies.

Indeed, I have not been able to detect any which might be strictly so called. By mute and impressive gestures, they sometimes give token that they recognize the being and presence of the Great Father of all good.

Their civil chiefs are hereditary, and answer nearly to the Levitical priesthood of the Hebrews, except that they unite more entirely in themselves the civil with the spiritual rule.

Their war chiefs are elected, as we have shown, from the body of the warriors. The civil chief is the executive judge, who administers justice to all.

The war chief is his lieutenant. He is, indeed, in one sense, a petty king, though the extent of his power and influence is strictly limited by his wisdom and the capacity for command he may exhibit in the council where he presides.

It will be perceived that, with such an organization, the habits of thought and feeling among these people would be entirely impulsive, simple, and direct.

What their passions taught they would obey; and this, though a terribly subversive and fatal doctrine to civilization, is to savage life entirely safe; for among them we find the grand exception, which civilization does not furnish, that their passions are healthy. Consequently, the frightful catalogue of crimes with which civilization is rotting through the morbid developments of the passions is almost entirely unknown among them.

The passions for war, plunder, and revenge might be said to be inordinately developed, but not morbidly; these are the uses of their social condition, and they seldom abuse them or are abused by them. They control them with that heroic stoicism which perfect health, physical development, and habits of abstinence alone can furnish.

The character and creed of the border ranger, when not entirely corrupted by the civilization he has left behind him, resembles that of his natural foe in very many respects.

His vigorous life is usually intact of the degenerating vices, and it is from this fact that his moral code derives a certain immobility and sternness of definition, which will admit of no variations within the range of those conscious instincts of honor, justice, and right, which are common to all mankind.

Beyond this they do not seek to penetrate, and if they knew beforehand, are eagerly ready to forget, since they only isolated themselves from civilization to get rid of what, to their free instinct, seemed merely conventional and unnatural requisitions.

With them the primitive virtues of a heroic manhood are all-sufficient, and they care nothing for reverences, forms, duties, &c., as civilization has them, but respect each other's rights, and recognize the awful presence of a benignant God in the still grandeur of mountain, forest, valley, plain, and river, through, among, and over which they pass.

With them, loyalty to the God of truth and nature is first, and loyalty to race and comrade next.

This is their creed in short.

Such men do not look back to society except with disgust, but look into the face of God as revealed in his natural world, and into the instincts of their own souls and hearts for what is just and true. To them all that is true, fitting, and natural in a passion, is proper and legitimate.

But their's is not the social legitimacy ; they care not a fig for what the judgment of conventionalities might be at home ; it was sufficient to them that the passion was appropriated here, under existing circumstances.

It was in this spirit that my passion for the French woman had been from the first regarded by my men. That it had seemed to them sacred and entirely fitting, witness the manner in which the first brutal suggestion of Dolphin Larry had been met ; witness the unhesitating devotion with which they had followed to the death my desperate fortunes, when they knew to a man that I had

been controlled in almost every movement since the recovery of our arms by this passion; witness the manner in which the brother of Dolphin had acted toward her and myself after the death of his own brother at my hands; witness their devotion in the last terrible fight, and the small remnant now left, who were as loyal and unshrinking as ever!

Does not all this show that rude frontier men are not only capable of recognizing the highest instincts of chivalry, but are practically, though unconsciously, as far advanced as the most noble and divine of modern philosophers in their perception of the holiness of honest love. The enchantment of woman's beauty, when united with the delicacy proper to her own sex and the resolute daring of the other, is more powerful with them, while at the same time they regard it with less surprise than would the men of civilization.

Nothing within the range of human capacity for evil or for good surprises them but treachery or cowardice.

They were not surprised to see me love the French woman, for that was natural to two young persons, such as we were, thrown together under circumstances so peculiar.

They *were* surprised at the brutality of Larry, for this was dishonoring to their hospitality as well as chivalry.

But they were not surprised to see the French woman kill the chief, for it was just what any "spunky gal" of their sisters or sweethearts at home would have done, and probably had done before on the frontier.

They were not surprised, but aroused, to see the French woman lead in battle, with the port of command, and the coolest daring; for they thought it all natural that a spirited woman who had been brave once should be brave again; and then this was a wild country, and it made all brave alike.

But it did not decrease the respect of such rude, honest men, for these, to them, natural traits, that she carried upon her calm

and open brow the white stamp of a nobler nature, gentler cultivation, and a more imperious will than theirs. They rather worshiped than wondered at her.

I too was a ranger, and my experiences in this wild life had been much the same as theirs, and had produced upon me very similar effects. I loved her because she was piquant, graceful, daring, and, to sum up all—sublime.

These were reasons enough why a ranger captain, or any other sort of a captain, should run mad about her, and do any amount of extravagant things in her behalf, leaving out of view the romance of the strange accident that had brought us together in such extraordinary scenes.

I still, with all my infatuation, had enough of the bitter leaven of civilized bigotry in me to curse her heartily at times for an evil witch, when the sting of suffering rankled most, for then I realized that she, or, rather, my passion for her, had caused it all; but one glance at her noble face had always been sufficient to make me heartily ashamed of the meanness.

This feeling of distrust and self-reproach could, of course, never have risen with regard to her for an instant, but for the agonizing doubts which would intrude themselves as to her true relations with Albert.

However graceful and beautiful she might be, the idea of wasting an eternity of passionate adoration upon the discarded mistress of another man was rather uncomfortable, even for a reckless ranger in the midst of the wilderness.

From what had fallen from this remarkable being, I could not believe her any thing else in my sane moments; yet there was something so pure, chaste, and even loftily superb in her bearing at all times, except when contrasted with moods of the most touching tenderness, that I had never been able to rid myself of the tones of a still but heart-heard voice, which gave the lie to all suspicions. It always conquered my jealous and desponding rage

by pleading, "The angel is known by its wings; hers were never soiled with her own foreknowledge of the infamy, for see! have they not grown as white and strong as ever?"

And yet! and yet! the *fade* licentiousness of Parisian life might well have sought, instinctively, the impunity of license afforded here, with none to question.

These cruel doubts, how they racked me! There was yet another side to the question. The two extremes of civilization come very near together.

Paris and a Camanche village approach each other much more intimately than Paris and Philadelphia do. In Paris, civilization has reached its culminating point. It is nearly the radiating center of human progress, scattering the keen, fresh light of latest truths upon an "outer darkness" that pervades the world.

This highest civilization has a tendency to bring us round and back again to our starting-place, and soon, in its contempt for conventionalities, rushes to an extreme, beyond the savage even, and comes to regard all social questions from a point of view which he would shrink from.

This worst form of libertinism of thought and sentiment has given birth to the ferocious school of French literature, which is far more shocking, with its hideous ideal, than a bruised Gorgon's head, with the black gore dripping from its writhing locks.

Indian scalp-taking is nothing worse than an innocent amusement when compared with its teachings and suggestions.

Among the followers of this school, I had no doubt Master Albert was to be classed. He had, probably, after running the whole round of licentiousness, sighed for new worlds to conquer, and come here to find them. It *might* be that something of the same feeling brought this brilliant and charming woman here from the *salons* of her beloved Paris! I say it might be; yet my heart gave the lie to this, in spite of my reason. It was a holier feeling, a sublime impulse, that must have moved this noble woman to

such a step; it must have been something higher than a vulgar passion for the romance of novelty. She was no soft girl, to go wild of a sickly sentimentality.

A passion which had been strong enough, at one time at least, to master and absorb the fiery will of her volcanic nature, must have been at the bottom of all this. The tender woman in her had been overcome, and, perhaps, her trust been foully wronged. That it had been outraged in one sense, she herself had told me; and God knows this wrong had been bitter enough to such a woman! but her occasional gloom, and those paroxysms of deep humiliation which I had frequently witnessed, taken with her rigid silence with regard to the definite character of the relations existing between Albert and herself, farther than that she had loved him, had impressed me with a vague apprehension that there must be something behind yet unrevealed, of which it was either too painful or too humiliating for her to speak.

I was not yet quite enough of a savage or of a Parisian to disregard these perplexing questions and doubts. It was still something to me whether the woman I loved was, or had been, the willing mistress of another. While the memory of my mother lingered with me, and my own self-respect remained, this could not be otherwise.

But Love is a most subtle sophist, and, if Reason will not avail, he takes refuge under the wings of Faith, and will suffer himself to be borne by them, as upon the wings of the morning, to the uttermost parts of the earth, in search of proof of what he desires to be true.

Her presence was sufficient to banish every lingering shadow from my sky, and flush the cold blue with a rosy warmth. It was, then, enough to be happy, and leave the future to take care of itself.

Ah! the delicious hours we passed together beneath those rude tents of buffalo hides!

I felt, in those communions, that though the future might reveal

that Albert had picked her out from the filthiest brothel of the vilest faubourg of Paris, and brought her here as the convenient creature of his beastly lust, it would make no real difference in my heart-feeling for; and recognition of her. Since we had met I had witnessed enough of all that is most gentle, devoted, delicate, and pure in her, that the fastidious idealist would demand in the exalted woman who should be the angel of his fireside, to sanctify and redeem the leman.

If there be rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that repenteth; should there not also be mercy and forgiveness at least upon earth? Ay, and when the good angel has returned to its "house of life" once more, and looks upon the world through calm, clear eyes, it is with command, not entreaty, that the brutality of the hardened scoffer is rebuked.

I was troubled with few bigotries or conventional scruples certainly, but I am sure that, had I been ridden by the most ferocious prudery that ever exhausted spinster minced and ambled beneath, that "old woman of the sea" would have vanished from my shoulders in decrepit hurry before a single keen, imperious glance from the dark eyes of the French woman; for, though she might have been a thousand times disgraced in the eyes of what we call "the world!" she would have flashed them down into cowed subjection before that haughty, self-reliant will of hers when once it had been roused. She was sufficient to herself, within herself, and, therefore, she could command.

Shrinking from consequences seemed to her nature an impossibility. If she had sinned wantonly, be it so! she sinned no more; and, as she felt that her peace had been made before the throne of Heaven, she no longer dreaded the eye of man; if she had sinned unwittingly, then there was nothing for either God or man to forgive, and in the presence of either she would be equally calm.

Thus it was I translated her through all that had fallen from her lips and had been expressed in her bearing. How near I came to the truth, perhaps the future may soon show!

Through all the weary period of our convalescence, until our entire and perfect restoration to health, Albert had been unceasingly assiduous in his attentions, presenting himself personally to me at least once, and most frequently twice a day, to inquire for the progress of my recovery, and do the agreeable in general.

Although he quite as often found me in the tent of the French woman as in my own, this circumstance never seemed for a moment to attract his attention ; he appeared rather pleased, indeed, that it should be so.

About the time I became able to remount my horse, he began to let me see the meaning of this extraordinary courtesy and interest in the progress of my recovery.

He now, with many protestations of respect and admiration, assured me that I had, by my prowess and bravery, inspired him at last with a most passionate friendship.

He had been a little suspicious of, and had somewhat disliked me, at first ; but gradually his respect had deepened into admiration, and then into such a friendship as could sacrifice a world for me.

I entirely recognized the disinterested character of these advances of my new and enthusiastic friend, particularly when he came to tell me, in the most confidential manner, that he had to propose to me a new enterprise, which would, most unquestionably, be attended with brilliant results to us both.

After a few days spent in preparing the way, he at last came to me with the announcement that he had completed his arrangements for a distant and somewhat dangerous enterprise, which yet could not by any possibility succeed unless I joined him with my men, and, more than all, would agree to associate myself, with my astonishing prowess, in the risks of the undertaking. He assured me that it was only necessary that I should say the word, and all my tribe would come at once into the arrangements he had projected.

After some little coquetry, he at last came out with the propo-

sition, in plain words, that I should join him, with my three men and my warriors, in an expedition, which he himself had long contemplated, to a famous mountain far within the Camanche country, which was believed to contain a gold mine of astonishing richness, the discovery of which would enrich us all. He promised that three hundred of his Caygua warriors should accompany any force of my tribe, whether great or small.

As I had determined in no event to shrink from the consummation of the purpose that brought me here, I at once consented to this arrangement, and on the next morning we were all under way for this ultimate El Dorado of our wild adventures.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HO FOR THE GOLD MOUNTAIN!

THE purpose of our new expedition was carefully concealed by both Albert and myself from the warriors of our respective tribes. The general prevalence among these southern Indians of a superstition which regarded with dread the approach of the white man to those deposits of the sacred metal within their own territories, made such a confidence on our part very insecure.

They understood that we were setting out upon one of those plundering forays to the Rio Grande border of Mexico upon which they had often before accompanied Albert.

Since they were entirely satisfied as to the general objects of the expedition, we supposed it would be easy enough to account to them for any variation of our course, necessary to bring us to the object we desired, as the result of accident.

This we thought we should be specially justified in trusting to, as we should now look to Old Hicks as our guide in reality, however much we might pretend to consult the warriors.

Indeed, the old man had lately, during our more extended excursions from the valley of the rancho, begun to recognize the features and character of the country, and had finally become convinced that he had seen portions of it before, during the period of his captivity.

Following up this suggestion, he had gradually worked out from his dim memories the true idea of our present position, both relative to our starting point and what he conceived to be the place of the Gold Mountain.

I had such entire confidence in his skill, experience, and sagacious intuitions, that I was entirely content to confide the whole details of our guidance to him, without questioning the Indians at all; and, as Albert had been equally impressed, it was determined that this matter should be left to his individual control.

We also confided in his knowledge of Indian character to keep up with them the deception we intended with regard to our true destination and purpose.

All this he now undertook with the cheerful and buoyant alacrity which belongs to ordinary youth. He forthwith made the grim chief his lieutenant, and organized his corps of spies, which was composed of picked warriors from the two tribes.

As for the geography of the region we were traversing, it was sufficient for me to learn from him that we were nearly a hundred miles due west of the Canadian, from the place of our last camp upon its banks, and that since that time we had been among the spurs of the Guadalupe Mountains.

This singular river finds its source among these mountains in innumerable springs. These fall away toward the northeast and southeast in many smaller streams, which unite to form its two great branches, or forks, and they then come together, after traversing and draining an enormous basin, not far above its final junction with the majestic Arkansas.

Before our expedition, this region was perhaps less explored than almost any part of the continent. It was the known and exclusive territory of the Camanches, and white men had never dared to penetrate it deeply.

That this was a sufficiently perilous undertaking, our own adventures thus far have sufficiently shown.

But, in spite of this, we were now under way, with the resolute intention of pushing several hundred miles further, into the very depths and center of its fastnesses.

Our order of march very nearly resembled that of a troop of regulars in the dragoon service.

Where the nature of the ground permitted, our line was scrupulously observed, and resumed whenever it became possible.

Our Indian allies had now begun to perceive that the discipline of civilization possessed several advantages over their own, and showed themselves willing to accept it in a partial sense.

There was, however, one irregular feature of our progress which the disciplinarian would hardly have accepted. In addition to our spy party, which went ahead, two large hunting parties flanked our course on either side, or lingered behind and followed on our trail, sometimes, as the exigencies of the hunt led them wide of our route, arriving at camp late in the night.

We had a small quantity of dried and pounded buffalo meat, venison, wheat, etc., along, enough for each person to sustain life upon for a week ; but this we kept untouched, in view of close places and trouble ahead. Our policy was to trust to the game that might be taken from day to day along our route for food, so long as it might be safe to send the hunters out. We had also renewed our supplies of ammunition abundantly from a *cache*, or buried deposit, which Albert had managed to save from the conflagration.

Thus we jogged on, through a region which every day became more mountainous and difficult, though with little to vary the ordinary incidents of travel in this country, and these we have already described with some minuteness.

The face of the French woman still looked somewhat sharpened and pale from her late suffering, though her limbs, so far as I could judge, seemed to have lost nothing of the extraordinary roundness and firmness peculiar to them.

She had now haughtily thrown off all compromises and every shadow of disguise with regard to her feeling toward Albert.

As regularly as our march was resumed in the morning she took her place by my side, and there she rode throughout the day as steadily as if it were a duty assigned.

Whenever Albert approached, as he frequently did, to interrupt our pleasant chit-chat, she looked into his face with a cool and steady stare of inquiry, as much as to say, "What do you want, sir?" If he spoke to her, she answered him with a polished *non-chalance*, such as well-bred persons assume to rebuke the approaches of a pert fellow who has presumed to address them without the proper formalities of an introduction.

This manner was so marked, that even the consummate impudence of the Parisian could not face it unabashed; and, after many and repeated efforts, which gradually became most forlornly spasmodic, he gave it up, and retreated sullenly upon himself.

This was a great relief both to her and myself; for, since some time back, he had seemed to consider it important to his own views that I should be regularly and effectually cajoled or blarnied into a devoted and even passionate affection for himself, through the superlative attractions of his condescending courtesy. I had humored this little weakness so long as my patience lasted, but as it had begun to be exhausted, the joke was becoming rather irksome to me, when this sullen fit on his part came to my relief.

These things, though small enough in the recital, were sufficiently important to attract the attention, not only of my three men, but as well of the quick-eyed warriors about us, every soul of whom recognized the true condition of things even more clearly than either she or myself did or could.

They all received it as a result so entirely common-place and natural, that it was not to be wondered at in the least, except poor Landeville.

We have in a good measure lost sight of him lately in the heady way of our narrative.

He was, as we have before indicated, a genuine back-woodsman of the noblest stamp. He was the simple, unsophisticated child of natural impulse on one side of his character, but the other was rigidly heroic, and as stern as death. He knew no compromises,

no middle ground between his own clear recognition of right and wrong! He looked at no such proposition from the conventional point of view, and raised few questions as to the intercourse of man with man or the other sex, but what few issues he did make were simple and self-evident. Since the remarkable scene in which he and his sister had been made known to each other, he had been as gay, happy, and confidently absorbed in her and Albert as if earth had nothing more to offer for the entire consummation of his bliss.

He had recognized Albert as her lawful husband without dreaming of any other possibility, and, under this impression, all his frank, loving, and generous nature had gone out toward, and been lavished upon, him. It seemed as though his cup of joy was full.

A sister found, over whose memory as lost he had so frequently yearned, and with her a new brother come to claim room in his heart—and such a brother, too! so tall and strong, with such a presence of nobility as gratified all those proud, instinctive tastes he himself had derived from his own gentle descent. Indeed, there was every thing in the beauty, superb bearing, and prowess of Albert to warmly attract such a nature as that of Landeville, had he only come to him as a countryman from that Mecca of the wandering French—Paris! It is curious that the tie of race is strongest among the two most impulsive, and yet most treacherous people upon the face of the earth, the French and Irish. The Frenchman is attracted toward his countryman because he understands the language spoken in beloved Paris, and can comprehend him when he boasts of "*Le Grand Empereur!*" The Irishman wants a sympathizing listener to his ancient and most melancholy monody over the "*Gim of the Sae!*"

Landeville would have regarded Albert from the heroic point of view, undoubtedly, had he met him simply as a countryman, but under this new relation he worshiped him. He had very much

withdrawn himself from Old Hicks and myself, that he might be constantly near to the object of his new passion.

I was not surprised at this. In his rude associations and perilous career, the life-blood of the sentiments had been locked up within him as in the embrace of winter; and now that the smile of a new spring, in a sister's love, had come to thaw it, what wonder it should leap onward at an accelerated flow, and invest every thing about him with a warmer light? He saw Albert through this medium alone, and loved him blindly. That philosophical person had quite coolly appropriated to himself all this honest devotion as the legitimate consequence of, and tribute to, his manifold attractions.

Whenever an opportunity offered they had been constantly together, engaged in long and confidential interviews, for Sir Albert was sufficiently condescending to patronize his rough and simple brother-in-law by a most magnanimous expenditure of patience upon him.

But a sad change had lately taken place, both in the relations of these two parties and in their respective bearing. Albert had just now become sullen, and withdrawn himself within himself, or, at least, within his own tribe, and all the child-like and buoyant gayety with which the life of Landeville had been galvanized had suddenly given way to a lowering and gloomy watchfulness.

He had withdrawn himself from all but constrained intercourse with every one around, but more particularly from any with Albert, his sister, and myself. I had noticed this shadow gathering over him some time before we started upon this expedition.

While in our hospital camp, when our convalescence commenced, the character of the relations between Albert, the woman, and myself had become more clearly defined, and, of course, contrasted, than it had ever been during the confusions and excitement of incessant action.

Before, there had been no time for Landeville to observe any

thing which could arouse his suspicions ; but in the quiet and repose of our life there, it had been forced upon him. He could not help seeing that his sister and myself had formed a close intimacy, and, blinded as he was, he could not but perceive, what all the rest of my men had seen long ago, that the presence of Albert was regarded with equal aversion by us both.

Rude as he was, and Frenchman as he had been born, it would have been no difficult undertaking for him to have faced the idea of an amour between his sister and myself, provided he whom he regarded as her lawful husband chose to shut his eyes to the dishonor ; and at first he had been rather distant than morose in watching the progress of the affair between two persons whom he loved so much as he did her and myself. But lately, since we had set out, an evident and most significant change had taken place in his regard of the relations of the three parties.

The stolid and brutal indifference of Albert to facts which must all along have stared him in the face ; the cool, insulting strangeness with which the French woman had lately repelled every attempt at a recognition on his part, had not been lost upon Landeville.

It was clear to me that his direct and simple instincts had now brought him round to much the same apprehension of the character of Albert, and suspicion of his conduct toward the French woman, that I had formed and felt.

The just and simple-hearted man ! He was utterly crushed by the mere suspicion ; but when he found the bright promise of this new-dawned spring-day of his life all clouded by the dismal shadow of dishonor, he seemed to bow his head in utter humiliation at first, and in prayer that this cup might pass from him.

Gradually he recovered from this mood, for I watched him closely, and then came another in which all the roused elements of good and evil seemed to be mingled in a passionate chaos, which left confusion worse confounded. Gradually he came forth from

this, with his whole nature and bearing so changed that I now shuddered to regard him.

From the elate, jolly, laughing Frenchman, he had suddenly congealed into the morose, dark-browed, and quick-eyed impersonation of jealous hate, though his suspicions seemed rather to center upon Albert than the French woman and myself.

All these indications were sufficiently significant to me, and I looked forward with inconceivable dread to the still and concentrating forces gathering in the breast of the stern but simple Landeville; my thought was, that the smothered volcano must explode soon, and then let him look out upon whose head its force would be expended, for it would strike like the justice of Omnipotence, as sure as it was fatal!

I felt a thorough conviction that mischief to Albert would come from this brooding, ominous quarter. I never for an instant apprehended any thing for the French woman or myself.

Our journey, in the mean time, was rendered charming beyond measure to me by the constant presence of the French woman at my side. This great change in the bearing of poor Landeville had of course attracted her attention. She had seemed at once to divine its meaning, and her head was bowed down with sorrow for several days.

After she had recovered her elasticity, I was frequently tempted to speak with her concerning these matters; but then her reserve with regard to certain passages in the intercourse between Albert and herself had been so marked, as contrasted with her great frankness upon all other subjects, that I did not feel disposed to risk being recognized and treated as intrusive.

Great as was my curiosity, it was restrained by the hope that circumstances would, before long, in some way afford the opportunity for an explanation.

With all these questions of doubt as to the past, and apprehensions of the future which would come up during the stillness of the

night, it required, when I arose, only time enough for me to obtain a single glance of her fresh morning face, and meet the electric sparkle from her eyes, to make it a heaven of unquestioning joy for me during the rest of the day.

The scenery was becoming more and more picturesque as we advanced, the plains and valleys narrower, the streams more frequent, and the mountains more abrupt.

As we penetrated deeper into the mountain chain, and the aspect of nature became more wild, she seemed to take from it an inspiration, as though the rough and sublime chaos of cliffs had passed into her being. Her port was higher, and there was in her eye a noble confidence.

We had on our way, so far, one or two slight collisions with Indian tribes, whom we met by accident; but, taking all the accidents and incidents of our journey together, it had been exceedingly lucky. Our hunters killed plenty of game, so that we had not to fast for a single meal or touch our reserved stock.

The Indians of both tribes were entirely subordinate, and, in a word, every thing moved on with our expedition like clock-work. The French woman became each day more frank and affectionate in her bearing toward me, while the only drawback to entire happiness was in the sudden and profound change which had taken place in the bearing and appearance of Landeville.

He sometimes spoke with Albert, though it seemed to cost him a great effort to address him at all. He never spoke to his sister now, and seemed to guard with a nervous apprehension against the chances of any explanation with her.

The man had grown haggard, and his eyes looked stern and fierce. He usually lingered either in the rear, or rode ahead of our march. Once or twice he accompanied Old Hicks and his spies in the early start they made in advance, but toward noonday we would come upon him loitering moodily upon their trail, as if drawn back by some dark spell stronger than his will.

We had now been nearly three weeks under way, when Old Hicks came to me one morning to announce that he believed we were within a short distance of our goal.

We were at the time in a valley among the mountains, which was about a mile in width ; a small stream, one of the head-springs of the north fork of the Canadian, coursed through its center. On either side the mountains were broken down their fronts, as if landslides had robbed them of their covering of earth, and presented bare and perpendicular cliffs of immense height. These were broken into the most grotesque forms conceivable, and were gray and gloomy, unrelieved entirely except by the blue sky against which they stood, and here and there a small patch of evergreen shrubs, which had found rooting-place between the crevices.

It seemed as if the earth had fallen down from their sides to fill up the valley.

The old man recognized these peculiar features, which were not to be mistaken the world over, and his announcement caused great delight to those of us who knew the purpose of our long pilgrimage. He felt sure that this singular valley would lead us to the mountain of which we were in search, in a short time.

But now commenced indications which were calculated to dampen the elasticity of our feelings somewhat.

On the evening of the very day when this announcement, so cheering to our hopes, had been made, the spies returned with the intelligence that they had observed several Indians among the cliffs above us, who were evidently watching our course.

This was an indication not to be mistaken, and it proved, as Hicks and myself had feared, that the crisis of our mad adventure was now gathering to a close.

The next day the Indians showed themselves standing among the crags, and shaking their weapons at us threateningly.

Albert was so elated by the near prospect of realizing all his avaricious dreams in reaching the Gold Mountain, that he forgot

his sullenness, and became as smiling, gay, and even more courteous than ever.

He sneered in reckless merriment at the supposed threat indicated in the presence of the Indians watching our course.

There was no danger for him now, so possessed was he by the frenzy of devotion to his yellow god! He spoke of these spies, who had so arrested the apprehensions of Old Hicks and myself, as mere stragglers of some forlorn hunting-party, and was so zealous in arguing that their presence meant nothing, that all of us caught something of his eager spirit, in spite of our more sane convictions.

Thus we continued to move on, while every day the Indians showed themselves on our right and left more openly. Old Hicks, however, was not to be deceived, and he told us that a general rising of the tribes might be expected to arrest our progress.

In the morning Old Hicks came to me with an expression of eager delight upon his face, and said that we were now close to the mountain which had so long been the object of our enthusiasm, and constituted the purpose and end of our long travel.

We were all delighted to hear this; and although, at the moment of the announcement, a large body of Indians showed themselves ahead of us, as if intending to dispute our further progress up the valley, yet we all regarded their presence with indifference, and only pushed on with greater speed.

Albert was perfectly wild with joy; and when the Indians, as they did several times during the day, offered themselves in open ground to dispute our progress, he charged upon them with a reckless and headlong vigor, which scattered them like chaff from our path.

But they seemed to be gathering the faster for every defeat, and when we had driven a hundred from the valley, several hundred would forthwith make their appearance on the mountain tops on either side of us. It was evident to me that the whole Camanche

country had been roused for the purpose of driving us back from their sacred mountain, and that we should soon have thousands of warriors swarming around our way. Yet Albert would not see this, and seemed to regard these collisions as mere sport ; but this sport became each hour more serious, for the Indians became more numerous and more daring.

The next morning we saw ahead of us, in the misty distance, a tall, conical mountain, which the old man at once assured us was the Gold Mountain. Its crest was sharply and clearly defined through the haze, and it appeared to be some ten miles off.

We had come in sight of it round a sudden turn of the valley, which here widened considerably, and seemed to end with this bold mountain, which stood as a sentinel, overlooking, with its giant brow, our approach.

The Indians of our two tribes had been growing restless for the last two days, and Hicks seemed to think that they suspected the object of our expedition. This, however, was too late to be remedied. We had looked forward to this contingency from the first, but were not prepared to see them take the alarm so promptly.

Albert was entirely beside himself when he saw thus before him the realization of all his daring dreams of boundless wealth. For myself, I must confess to a feeling of wild and joyous eagerness, which it would be difficult for me to express, and which regarded indifferently all the threatening circumstances by which we were surrounded.

We camped that evening in sight of the Gold Mountain, and never did men awake with a feeling of profounder relief and happier anticipations than we did on the next morning.

Albert lavished courtesies not only upon myself, but as well upon the French woman, in spite of her stateliness, and all the rest of the camp. He was entirely running over with amenities, and had forgotten every cause of displeasure.

Landeville was the only person who did not seem to enter into this ecstatic state.

There was something in his face this morning which reminded me of the expression it wore on the night when he recognized his sister, except that now, with all its ghastliness, it had a lowering fierceness in it that was terrific.

For the first time in many days, he now rode up to the side of Albert, who was but a few paces in advance of us, and there commenced between them an interview which I felt was ominous.

Albert, in full view of the realization of all his avaricious dreams, was imperious and insolent. I overheard enough of what was said to understand that Landeville was demanding of him an explanation of the true relations existing between the French woman and himself.

Albert for some time avoided a direct answer, and then gradually seemed to lose patience.

He was too much excited by the view of the new El Dorado he had won and conquered to listen patiently to the questions of Landeville with regard to so very delicate a subject as the character of the relations, past and present, existing between himself and the French woman.

We rode near enough in the rear to hear the most of this conversation, without being intentional listeners, or without attempting to understand what was said, except as it was forced upon our senses.

That Albert was insolent, and refused any explanation, was all that I could understand.

In the mean time, as we approached the mountain, the Indians of our tribes seemed to waver more and more, while on either side of us, from the opposite cliffs, the hostile tribes were gathered, to overwhelm us whenever the opportunity offered.

The interview between Albert and Landeville was gradually becoming more excited. At last I heard Albert say, in a loud, an-

gry voice, "No, fool ! if you will have it ! She is not my wife ! I was obliged to humbug her by a mock marriage before she would consent to come here with me !"

"You humbugged her, did you ?" said Landeville, in a low voice hissed from between his set teeth, while he drew his pistol with a quick movement from his belt.

"I judge you will not humbug another sister of mine soon—take that !" and he fired. I saw the dim spot on Albert's white forehead as he pitched forward convulsively upon the neck of his horse and rolled from the saddle.

Landeville very coolly placed his mouth to the muzzle of his pistol and blew the smoke out.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE RETREAT.

THE suddenness with which this stern and terrible act of vengeance had been consummated stunned us all.

We heard the heavy thump of Albert's body as it fell to the earth; but all eyes were directed for a moment to the haggard face of his executioner, in a bewildered stare.

There was something far more fearful in the appearance of Landeville himself than in that of his victim. The one was already a corpse, with eyelids still quivering over the glazing eyes, which were turned, with now sightless orbs, toward that distant mountain; the other looked the cold demon of a ferocious justice, as, raising his head, after having blown the smoke from his pistol, he smiled grimly upon us.

Our party rode considerably in advance of either of the tribes. They had heard the fatal pistol, and the clatter of their hurried approach recalled us to our senses, and a full consciousness of the appalling dangers by which we were now surrounded.

"The Cayguas! the Cayguas! there'll be the devil to pay with them now! Let's fall back upon our Camanches!" said Old Hicks, my faithful monitor, hastily.

We wheeled. The Cayguas were ahead, and I saw our only course was to dash swiftly by them, and join our tribe in the rear, before they had time to realize the loss they had sustained in their chief, Albert, or understand how it happened.

Before dashing off, I turned my head to look for the French

woman. She sat, regardless of us all, gazing in white, abstracted melancholy upon the corpse of Albert.

I instantly seized her horse's rein, and she passively submitted to be borne along with us, apparently in perfect unconsciousness of what we were doing, or of the meaning of the scene. She only turned her head slightly back for another look as we went off.

The moment, however, we met the approaching column of the Camanches, and became involved in the clamorous hubbub of excited hurry and inquiry which was consequent, she seemed to be suddenly aroused as from a dream, and an electrical energy at once possessed her.

Some prompt explanation of what had occurred, which would at once satisfy the Camanches, was of course necessary ; for, as we have already shown, both the tribes had exhibited an inclination to desert us, as they now strongly suspected the object of our expedition.

If we were deserted, or given up to the vengeance of the Cayguas, the result would be equally disastrous and fatal.

We found Old Hicks, who had obtained the start of us, already in the midst of the Camanche chiefs, speaking to them most vehemently. They had partially halted, and were listening as attentively as the noise and confusion caused by the warriors coming up at full speed, on all sides, would admit.

Had I even known their language, it would have been impossible for me to hear what he was saying ; but I soon saw the effect.

The chiefs seemed to hesitate for a moment, as if consulting, and then rushed upon the old man from every side, and seizing, instantly disarmed him.

They were dragging him from the saddle, head foremost, when the French woman urged her horse into their midst, and the peculiarly ringing tones of her clear voice rose above the tumult.

There was a pause while they listened. She pointed with rapid gestures toward the spot where Albert's body lay, toward the Gold

Mountain, and then to Landeville, seeming to explain rapidly the causes of the late disaster.

The confusion was partially stilled until she ceased, when it became greater than ever. The grim chief, rushing forward, followed by several others, hurled aside those who held the old man, and in a moment he was freed again, and with his weapons in hand.

He did not attempt to use them, but only appeared to follow up what the French woman had said by words and gestures of confirmation.

The grim chief and the French woman supported him with such effect, that in a sullen murmur the trouble subsided gradually.

Indeed, this was now forced upon them by the necessity of self-defense, whether they were satisfied or no ; for the hostile Indians by whom we were surrounded, and overlooked from the cliffs above, had witnessed all this scene, and, without understanding its significance, it was sufficient for them that it showed a division among ourselves, which offered them a fair opportunity to strike, and they were accordingly making active demonstrations of an immediate intention to take advantage of it.

As to the intentions of the Cayguas we could not so well judge ; but what we could clearly enough perceive was the immediate necessity of a rapid retreat.

Old Hicks had now rejoined me. There was no time for explanation, for our avowed foes were fast disappearing from the cliffs, no doubt with the intention of descending into the valley to get at us, and the Cayguas, who were gathered about the body of Albert, were evidently, from their furious gestures, too doubtful allies to be trusted for a moment.

We accordingly set off at full speed on our retreat down the valley, in the hope of gaining some shelter among the timber before the double storm with which we were threatened should burst.

Our party brought up the rear, and, before we were quite a mile's distance, we reined up for a moment to look back.

Cayguas had not changed their position, and yet seemed to utterly confounded and uncertain what course to take, while a large body of the hostiles, who had reached the valley, were coming toward them at full speed.

We saw an unarmed warrior quit the ranks of the Cayguas, and gallop forward to meet them, bearing a white pennon. He was instantly ridden down, and, at the same moment, the Cayguas broke up into small parties, and followed us precipitately.

We now hurried on with accelerated speed. It was riding for dear life, for it was clear that, unless we could gain some position of advantage, from which we could make a defense before being overtaken, our smaller party would, in any event, be annihilated. We knew too much of the devotion of the Cayguas for Albert to suppose that they would ever forgive his death at our hands in reality, however they might pretend to do so from policy; and we had more to fear from their treachery while mingled with us, than from their hostility as avowed enemies, so that we considered it equally as important to prevent them from joining us as to keep beyond the reach of their pursuers.

On we hurried, with the reckless speed which desperate apprehension furnishes, feeling that every step we gained was so much between us and certain destruction.

Our horses were greatly fagged by our long travel, but we used both quirt and spur with an energy that fairly maddened them into the most tremendous exertion.

We had nearly a mile the start, and I had time frequently to turn my head and observe the exigencies of the pursuit.

The overwhelming force of the hostiles was rapidly closing upon the flying Cayguas, who yet appeared, by their gestures, to be endeavoring to make them apprehend that they were friends; but without avail, for they yet pertinaciously bore along with them the body of Albert, whom their pursuers had seen fall, and recognized as a white man.

Again, as they were closer pressed, I saw them throw body, and renew their friendly gesticulations ; but they were disregarded ; the foe came on relentlessly.

Then I turned again, and saw the pursuers close with the pursued. Both parties mingled with a howl, that reached us like the shocking startle of a thunder-clap out of a clear sky.

They were now merged into one rushing mass, the onward progress of which did not appear for one moment stayed. Whether the Cayguas had been instantly annihilated or not, it was impossible for me to judge.

Their fate was sufficiently ominous, and we had quite enough to occupy us in the efforts necessary for our own escape, to prevent a closer examination as to their fate.

On, on they came, raging like a hell of furies in our wake ; and all the hope we had left was that our horses might yet hold out a few miles, until we could reach some heavily-timbered motts, which we remembered broke up the valley into thread-like meadows of prairie.

But the terror was, that their fresh horses would bear down as easily upon us as they had upon the Cayguas, whose horses were of course as much fatigued as ours.

However, we had to comfort and encourage us the recollection that we had obtained nearly a mile the start, while they had little over two hundred paces ; and if our horses only held out, we had some hope of reaching the motts.

It was a terrific race.

We were not exactly panic struck, but desperate. Resistance would be useless, nay, impossible, unless we reached cover. That heavy mass would pass trampling over us, as over a ripe wheat-field, bending as we were to fall already, with our exhausted horses.

Ah ! how dear life seemed to me now, for the first time, through all the perils of these adventures ! now, at last, I had something to make it dear to me, and now both the object and the life were, as my fears represented, for the first time really jeopardized.

We had passed through quite as many fearful exigencies as this without a thought of apprehension on my part, but then SHE had not been free, nor had I clearly recognized that she *might* be something to my future!

We had now come in view of the haven of temporary safety, at least, yet it was still nearly two miles off. But our horses were beginning to fail.

The prodigious tension of speed up to which they had been lashed through such a distance began to tell now in the snapping of life-cords, and, as we rushed on, rider and horse lay here and there on either side of our track.

The horses of the Indians ahead first began to fail, and when they did, would drop as if shot through the head. We could not stop, and left their riders to meet the warrior's fate as they might.

We had now swept past some fifteen or twenty dismounted riders and dead horses, and were within half a mile of the motts, when a deafening yell from behind announced that our foes were close at hand. Looking over my shoulders, I saw they were indeed fearfully close. I caught a glimpse of the straining nostrils of their horses and of their gestures of triumph.

Ah! it was very terrible! We made yet more convulsive efforts to force our wretched horses on, and some of them, gamer than the rest, responded nobly, but their dark forms dotted the earth thicker and thicker as we rushed by.

I now began to miss men from my side. With a wild, strange laugh, Dr. Martin went down with his horse and air-gun upon my left, and in another instant, his defiant death-cry reached me.

Under other circumstances, had all the Indians that ever wore moccasins been close enough for me to feel the hot breath of their pursuit, I am sure I should have stopped to avenge that cry. But she! she who rode at my side! I could see, hear, know nothing else but her! This was disloyal to the faith of comradeship, but it was loyalty to the religion of the heart.

The last spasm of effort had come. The arrows of our pursuers were whistling into our midst when we reached the motts.

Here our Indians scattered in every direction, each taking care of himself as he could.

The first of the motts were chaparral thickets, and could not be penetrated; but there were many small openings between them, and into these we dived in small squads.

This character of the ground broke up the front and weight of the enemy's pursuit, since only a small number could follow us abreast, and this more nearly equalized our strength.

We now reined up somewhat, and gave them the contents of three guns. This was a rash proceeding, for we should have been content to keep on, without attracting particular attention to ours, among the many other parties who were flying through the different lanes of prairie.

Our discharge made their front recoil, but then it had the effect of drawing hundreds in our direction from the rear; and what made the imprudence still more disastrous, the narrow passage we had chosen soon opened into a small meadow-prairie, which gave them an opportunity to spread.

The grim chief, with about thirty of his, or, rather, my warriors, who had stuck close, since his rescue, to Old Hicks, led all the force there was still left to back the forlorn quartette composed of Hicks, Landeville, the woman, and myself.

In a twinkling the little prairie was filled in our rear by over two hundred howling, eager warriors, who rushed upon us now as sure prey.

There had been no time for us to load our guns; but I saw that, on the opposite side, at less than a quarter of a mile's distance, the open timber commenced.

To reach this was security; but they were upon us, and our horses were staggering. We yet had two pistol-loads apiece except Landeville. Never was the last round of a forlorn hope de-

livered with more desperate steadiness than those last shots of ours at close quarters.

We fired at intervals, one at a time, as we slowly retreated, whenever they pressed too closely upon us. As our advance of warriors reached the timber, they made a most furious demonstration to cut us off.

They were so close, that several of their lances were thrown at us, but these we were, by this time, dexterous enough to dodge. As we rose, three of us fired our last pistol, which caused them to hesitate an instant, since a warrior fell for every shot.

With a terrific yell of disappointed fury, they rushed on again as we were hurrying our enfeebled horses after the Indians into the timber, when I heard a single shot behind us, and, looking round, saw a feather-crowned chief tumble from his saddle in the front, and, as they all recoiled, Landeville waved above his head the second pistol that had slain a chief that day, and, with a harsh yell, spurred on his tottering horse after us.

They did not attempt to follow us further, for we immediately dismounted, and took our positions behind the trunks of the trees.

Southern Indians never leave their horses to assail such a defense, and, after a shot or two from our reloaded rifles, they commenced a rapid retreat.

Oh, what a relief, and what forlorn and weary wretches we all were !

Most of our horses fell as we dismounted from them, and those of the Indians whose horses could still go on, dispersed in search of water through the mott.

After a short absence, they returned with full gourds. We took a mouthful or two ourselves, and then they drenched our dying horses by pouring it down their throats. It was not long before the poor animals aroused, and commenced cropping the luxuriant grass about them. In a few hours we were all able to reach the

small stream they had found running through the mott, and there we drank, bathed, ate, and slept.

The next morning when we awoke, we found that Old Hicks was already out on a spying range with his new crony, the grim chief. As it was out of the question to send out hunters, we now, for the first time, fell back upon our light packages of dried food. Late in the morning, they returned with the news that they had discovered that, on three sides of our position, our foes were encamped along the skirts of the mott, apparently with the deliberate purpose of starving us out. This was dismal news enough!

The mott was about two miles in length by half a mile in width. This space afforded sufficient grazing ground for our horses, and, as our enemies made no attempt to penetrate the timber, it was quite enough of a stronghold for us. We frequently made sallies, but in whatever direction we attempted, they met us in overwhelming force and drove us back. As our week's provision began to fail, we became more desperate, and made renewed and incessant efforts at all hours of the night and day to cut our way through, but we could never surprise them; they were always on the alert.

In many of these efforts we had some close fighting, and would lose several men. We had received no addition to our numbers, as I supposed would be the case, from those parties that had turned down other openings into the chaparrals, and therefore we were being fast thinned out.

They had "earthed" our party, and, caring nothing for the others, had probably let them go; but that they were determined to have us, their surprising vigilance dearly proved.

Old Hicks accounted for this by the presence of a great number of the Cayguas among them. How it happened that they had been spared we could only conjecture. We were convinced that many of them must have been slain when they were overtaken, and before they had time to explain.

But we supposed they had made their conquerors understand that they had been betrayed by Old Hicks and myself into accompanying us thus far, without their knowledge of the purpose of our journey, and that we had slain their chief Albert because he was unwilling to go on. Such an explanation would no doubt have been satisfactory to these tribes, who were no others than our old foes the Kewanies, and those mountain tribes who had burned the rancho, united with many others who had rallied at the alarming news of the white man's approach to their Sacred Mountain.

They were burning for vengeance against us for their defeat in the valley of the Mission, and they eagerly availed themselves of the acquired tactics of the Cayguas, who were far more skillful, and even more relentless than they.

The old man had now explained to me the maneuver by which he had succeeded in bringing our Camanches over to our support at the critical moment in our retreat.

We have described the scene. It will be recollected that he got the start of us, and, rushing into their midst, was making some explanation, the meaning of which I did not understand.

He had told them that we had just discovered that Albert was an evil conjuror, who had, by his spells, discovered the location of their Sacred Mountain, and had decoyed us to it for the purpose of robbing it of its sacred metal, while he pretended that his object was to plunder the Rio Grande towns; that when we came in sight of it, we had all recognized it by the legendary descriptions of its locality, and wished the evil conjuror to turn back. This he had refused to do, and was attempting to compel us, by his spells and the power of his evil eye, to go on, and that Landeville had shot him before his spells could take effect.

This was a plausible tale, and turned with great ingenuity upon the superstitious fear of Albert, which, he knew, prevailed among these Camanches.

But then one of the chiefs suddenly gave a new turn to the

effect he had produced by denouncing the old man as being in league with the conjuror, since they all knew that he had been the chief guide.

This revulsion would have been fatal to the veteran but for the interference of the French woman, for whom they had a deep reverence. She had heard the artful story, and confirmed every word of it, and appealed to their own recollection for the proof that she had lately shown in her conduct toward him, her hatred of him, and distrust of his evil purposes. She represented the old man as having been controlled by the evil spells Albert had cast over him, and as innocent of any intention to lead them here, since he knew not of the place. This had fully satisfied the grim chief, who yet retained much of his influence over his tribe, and the dissatisfaction had no time to gather head, from the rapidity of the events which followed.

It is hard to say which tale was the more artful, that of the Cayguas or of Old Hicks. Suffice that they both answered the end proposed equally well.

Our beleaguerment was steadily persevered in, and we were reduced to the verge of starvation, though our horses were rapidly fattening and regaining their strength.

Now all the skill and experience of the two old hunters, aided by that of our Indian allies, was brought into requisition, in finding food enough to keep us alive. Our time was almost entirely employed in digging such esculent roots as we had discovered within the limits of the mott.

These, however, were very few; and, after this singular and pertinacious blockade had continued through twelve days, we had become greatly emaciated, and were suffering most acutely the remorseless pangs of hunger.

At last, in one of our sallies, we succeeded in bringing back with us the horse of a warrior who had been slain. We immediately killed the poor animal, and cooked its flesh for food. Ah! this was a delicious meal, and greatly invigorated our weakened bodies.

We had lately become so depressed by hunger and the unpromising aspect of our position, that we had lacked the spirit to make any renewal of our efforts to escape, and were on the eve of resigning ourselves to starvation, or else eat our own horses, which would have been quite as suicidal, since without them we had no shadow of hope that we should ever escape from this infernal country. But now, upon the carcass of this poor steed, we felt as if we had taken a new lease of life, and determined upon immediate escape at all risks.

These tribes are too restless and insubordinate to be held in one place long for any reason, and we had all the time calculated upon their breaking up in disgust of inaction ; symptoms of this had been for several days apparent. On this day Old Hicks announced to me that, in the course of his active reconnoitering, he had perceived evident preparations for leaving among several of the tribes. He thought they would go before night, and now was our time to be off.

At nightfall we built large fires near the edge of the mott, where they would be clearly in view of the enemy, to deceive them.

A little after midnight we rose and moved quietly toward the position of the restless tribes, and, fortunately, found the expectations of the old man realized. They were gone, and we passed unmolested out from our forest prison, and in half an hour had threaded the maze of chaparrals and motts, and found ourselves once more bounding along the open plain of the valley, while our hearts leaped wildly with the joy of freedom. Our horses were entirely fresh, and we felt that we could now defy pursuit in a great measure.

It was, as we well knew, entirely useless to attempt to conceal our trail, and so we kept boldly on over the open ground, trusting rather to the rapidity of our movements, and in the skill with which our camping-ground was chosen.

We moved at as great speed as our horses could possibly bear for the first and second days. We were then compelled by hunger

and fatigue to move more slowly; game was killed sufficient to feed our famishing bodies fully for the first time in nearly fifteen days.

To my great alarm, I now found, on examination, that our party had only five rounds of ammunition apiece. In two hours after this discovery, Hicks came in with the intelligence that Caygua and Kewanie spies were on our trail.

The two discoveries were terribly startling, but I kept the first most carefully from the knowledge of our tribe. The French woman, on hearing it, roused once more from the lethargic state which had been common to her since the death of Albert, and told me that the traitor had sunk a small "*cache*" of provisions and ammunition a day's ride from this place, without my knowledge, intending it for his own return *without me!* He had also left another large one, containing articles of great value, near the site of the burned rancho.

This news was inexpressibly comforting, and we mounted instantly for the purpose of reaching it before we should be attacked, or before the Cayguas—as they probably knew of it—had time to rob it.

Happily, we found it all secure, though we had scarcely time to get out the ammunition before a party of Cayguas, something stronger than ours, hurried up, on the swoop for the same prey; but we gave them so warm a reception that they were fain to fall back as fast as they came. We had been a little too soon for them. From this time until we reached the ruins of the rancho, we were harassed every day by the Cayguas.

They had two motives in this: they suspected the existence of the large *cache* at the rancho, but did not know its precise position, for Albert had carefully concealed this from the knowledge of every one but the French woman, and they desired to cripple and embarrass us as much as possible, that they might have time to get there first and search for it; the other motive was revenge.

The Kewanies had deserted them, and they were not strong enough to strike at us alone since their heavy losses.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ALL EXPLAINED.

WITH all these vexations, we gained strength every day, and reached the rancho ruins in something like high spirits. We found a small body of Cayguas there searching for the *cache*, and after giving them a sound drubbing, we built our fires near the wreck of the magnificent live oak which we have described as standing at the corner of the rancho. One half of its great limbs had been scorched by the fire that consumed the buildings, and was now dead, but the other half was green and fresh as ever; even its moss drapery looked unruffled.

Under this old tree we found the *cache*. It will be remembered that the woman, Albert, Landeville, and myself first ate together beneath this tree in a sort of bower formed by the pendant moss. After our meal, Albert had lifted the moss and passed in further beneath the immense limbs, and, as I at the time conjectured, into another apartment like the first. Here he had buried all his valuables.

It was under this primitive shelter they had lived during the first six months after reaching the valley, and while the rancho was being completed.

We found the *cache* had not been disturbed, nor, indeed, did it appear that the little bower had been entered since he last left it. The French woman, Landeville, and myself sat down upon rude seats, and from ruder implements ate one more meal beneath the shelter of this most rude and ancient "house not made with hands."

It was a melancholy meal. The woman appeared haggard and worn. There was a wandering abstraction in her look, which frequently rested mildly, but mournfully, for a moment upon myself.

I felt that the time had come ; and, after our slight repast, during which no word was spoken, I moved closer to her side, and taking one soft and unresisting hand tenderly in mine, I said, in a low voice,

“Is not this the time and the place for us to hear all you choose to tell of the past ?”

She started somewhat, and her pale cheek flushed a little, while she turned upon me her large dark eyes, which were suffused instantly as she felt my touch, with a sparkling, tremulous mist, and said, with mournful earnestness,

“Yes ! yes ! my dear friend, I recognize your right to an explanation here, beside the charred ruins of my once pleasant home, of much that seems mysterious to you in my history. So long as that bad man lived my lips were sealed. He has now met a retribution which could only have come properly from the hand of a brother or from my own. I had spared him, for the ægis of sacred memories protected him, and so long as he did not venture to add personal indignity to more deadly outrages, he was safe from me, and knew it.

“You too, my brother, have a yet more imperative right to know, of a surety, that in acting sternly and promptly as you did, you not only honored the noble instincts of your birth, which no rude circumstances seem to have been sufficient to eradicate or weaken, but have been righteously just in so doing.

“This man whom you slew was Albert, Count Beaufort.

“His father, the old count, was the representative of one of the most ancient and powerful families of the old *noblesse*. He held an hereditary office in the household of Louis the Sixteenth at the time of the Revolution. He was a treacherous and subtle man, and deserted his master in the last extremity. After the execution

of the poor king, the old count, after being concealed under various disguises, escaped at last, through many perils, to America, with his wife, and took up his residence in New Orleans.

“My father, Le Compt L’Entville, a distant connection of the Beauforts, and belonging to the same obnoxious order, was more fortunate. Having never been connected with the court, he managed to weather the storm, and, though subjected to very serious losses, was finally permitted to retain quiet possession of his chateau and estates near Paris.

“He was a stern, grave man, much addicted to philosophical studies; and as it was the general impression that these had given him a decided leaning toward the liberal views which then convulsed France, the destroying angel passed over the lintels of his door-way for the time. He took no part whatever in the agitations around him.

“When the news of Napoleon’s rising greatness reached America, Count Beaufort, leaving his wife in comfortable circumstances, joined his army under an assumed name as a private. He soon fought his way up from the ranks to a captaincy, which promotion was conferred by Napoleon himself on the field of battle. After the great man became emperor, the gallantry of this captain of Huzzars frequently attracted his attention, and he promoted him through all the grades, until finally he reached that of General of Division.

“Soon after the return from Elba, Napoleon discovered by accident, as he thought, but truly, by a dexterous maneuver on the part of the disguised count, the real name of his pet, and promptly restored him to possession of his title and estates.

“At the battle of Waterloo he was among the first to desert the falling fortunes of a master for the second time, and, after the restoration, managed to make his peace and have his claims and title recognized. He then returned to America for his wife.

“About the same time that the fortunes of Count Beaufort took

the first favorable turn under the smiles of Napoleon, those of my father sunk beneath the shadow of his terrible frown.

“His great wealth first attracted attention to him, and then his unfortunate reputation for liberality of sentiment and opinion was brought forward into an undue prominence by the jackals of power.

“My father was summoned to present himself at head-quarters before the emperor. He had preserved most scrupulously a strict neutrality, and did not choose now to be compelled to compromise himself, and with a dogged and, perhaps, rash independence, refused to obey.

“He was ordered to quit the country in five days, and his estates were forfeited. He gathered together what fragments of his wealth he could, and sailed for America.

“He belonged to the heroic school of De Witt, and did not murmur. My mother was worthy of him. Jacques and myself were their children, he being over ten years the older. We reached New Orleans, but my father soon found that the wreck of his fortune which he had been able to bring with him was not sufficient to establish his family, even there, in such style as he thought becoming, and with the hardy manliness peculiar to his school of independent thought, he determined rather to invest what little he possessed upon the frontier of our settlement, and face all its hardships, than occupy a false position. He purchased a plantation upon the borders of the Cherokee nation.

“In two years he died of the acclimating fever. Before this event, he had, partly in his ignorance of Indian character, and partly from the stern impetuosity of his temper, mortally offended a vagabond Cherokee chief who hung about the settlement.

“All I can remember is, that not long after my father's death, my little brother Jacques disappeared suddenly, and that, following quick upon my childish grief for the loss of my protector and playmate, came the burning of our house, and then a gloomy period of suffering, when my mother and myself seemed to be traveling alone

through a wild country. We came at last to a great city, and there I found myself surrounded by those objects of luxury to which I had been accustomed. This city was of course New Orleans, and we had fallen among the friends of our family.

"After some months, my mother left me with such expressions of a hopeless and heart-rending anguish as still linger vividly with me. I never saw her again, and all that I could ever gather of her fate was, that she went back to our plantation on the frontier, accompanied by an old and intimate friend of my father, with the view of selling off the landed property and settling her affairs there. That she died and was buried there was all I knew; and when I asked for the golden image of our Savior, which she had always worn about her neck, as a memento of her, I was told that it had been buried with her body.

"That beautiful image had too often been presented, warm from its nestling-place nearest her heart, to my infant lips, while kneeling in prayer beside her, for me to readily forget it. I instantly recognized it in the hands of my brother, though so many years have intervened. I suppose this vindictive Cherokee consummated his revenge by tearing it from the bosom of my mother either before or after her burial.

"I was then taken back to France and adopted by a widowed sister of my father, who resembled him greatly in some inferior traits of character. She lived almost alone in her magnificent chateau, near Paris, surrounded by the old family servants.

"She was gloomy and morose, and left me almost entirely to myself. She humored every whim of mine rather because she disliked the trouble of counteracting them than from any special affection. Her fortune was not great, and I had few advantages of instruction. But there was in the house one of the most extensive, varied, and valuable private libraries in France, and here I ranged, without check or comment on the part of any one, in unrestrained license.

“With no older or wiser friend to give direction to my tastes, I devoured recklessly every thing that came in my way. My appetite for the romance of knowledge was insatiable, and, with the exception of an occasional master in music and the languages, and a few days’ intercourse with her stately and punctilious visitors, who all belonged to the old *régime*, I saw no one but the neighboring villagers, with whom I could have no sympathy, and was, therefore, thrown back to live entirely in an ideal world of books and dreams.

“Thus I grew up with impulses as bold, wild, and free as those of a Camanche maiden, and in utter ignorance of the world of civilization. I could ride like an English fox-hunter, and, in all physical accomplishments within the possibilities of the free life of a woman in France, excelled remarkably.

“Thus I lived a chartered libertine in the free air of my own bold and vigorous impulses, until I had reached my eighteenth year. With my head teeming with the wildest and most impossible romances, and my blood boiling with suppressed fires, I was sent to Paris by my stately aunt, to make my *début* in society there.

“I was consigned to an old friend of hers, as frigid and formal as herself. I was presented in due form, but it is useless for me to describe all the phases and transitions of development through which I passed during the first three or four years of my life in Paris. Suffice it that I was, of course, greatly tamed down in manner, though not in spirit or temper. I had yet found no one to love, and was beginning to long heartily again for the unrestrained freedom and quiet of my aunt’s chateau, when at one of the levees of the Republican king I witnessed the presentation of a young noble, whose *distingué* bearing and manly beauty at once arrested my imagination.

“I went home to dream of the gay and bright young cavalier. My heart had heretofore been untouched, although my wild yet

dashing eccentricity had attracted to me a great amount of admiration, which was mainly owing to the fact that the instincts of my taste were natural, and the action of my life extraordinarily bold.

"I soon heard the name of this young man, which was at least upon the mouth of every woman I met. It was Albert, Count Beaufort, who had lately come into possession of the magnificent estates of his father.

"I loved him at first sight, and therefore disregarded all the stories which were current about him.

"We soon knew each other. My protectress lived in the Faubourg St. Germain, not far from his hotel; and we met every day. She cared more for cards and her antiquated friends than for me, so that I was left without the shadow of restraint to follow out my wild and untamed impulses, while she stupefied herself with snuff and *écarté*.

"I have told you how beautiful he seemed to me then; but language can not convey the rounded and glowing real which in him seemed to have come as conqueror of the ideal of my wild dreams.

"Soon there came to me from all quarters, as our intimacy increased, the most terrible stories with regard to his habits. It was represented to me that he was a most inveterate gambler and coarse libertine.

"He was represented as being equally well known among the private and magnificent salons along the Boulevards, in which fashionable gamblers exchange fortunes, and in the low dens of *La Cité* and the Faubourg St. Antoine. But I loved him, and did not believe all this!

"He was unutterably beautiful to me, and I was happy! He was then the lion of Paris. It was rumored that much of his life had been passed in travel, and that he had passed through many wild adventures in strange lands.

“But most particularly was he the hero of the most extravagant stories of romantic incident here in the southwest of this New World. Much of these rumors was no doubt true, as he told me.

“He was born soon after his father had left to join the armies of Napoleon; when his father came back, after being restored to his estates, the fancy took him to travel across from New Orleans to Mexico. Albert accompanied him on this journey. It was one of extraordinary peril; but the old count fell in love with this region, and tarried in it for some months. He had a large train with him, and a great amount of such necessities as are wealth to the Indian. He was profusely generous in bestowing them upon all the tribes who could be induced to treat with him at all.

“These Indians were far more tractable and confiding then than now, and from them he heard the legend of the Gold Mountain. When he reached Mexico, his first move was to obtain a grant of this territory from that government.

“This accounts for the readiness with which Albert was recognized when we came here, by the Indians of the country. They still remembered well the generous munificence of the adventurous traveler, and many of them remembered the young son.

“But to return: Albert was to me perfect in all things which could gratify and realize a most willful and exacting taste. He was noble and beautiful; he was decidedly the lion of the season, and invested by the Parisian *belles* with all the attributes of a chivalric and extravagant romance.

“What wonder, then, that, with my bold recklessness and untamed instincts, I loved him wildly. It was rumored that he was loosing the estate of his father with terrible rapidity at the gaming table; but this I also disregarded. We now were betrothed lovers, and within the sacred, trusting repose of this beautiful passion he brought another.

“He warmed my daring fancy by exaggerated stories of the picturesque charms of this wild region, and, with a persevering clo-

quence, possessed my very soul with the eager yearnings for adventure amid such novel surroundings.

“He had fitted out a vessel for the voyage here, and appealed to me by my love for him to accompany him. He was every thing of love and life to me, and how could I hesitate? He proposed that our marriage should be solemnized on board his vessel. My grim protectress hated him because he had maliciously beaten her at *écarté* several times and won her money. I had no one in whom I trusted to advise or sympathize with me. It was necessary that I should leave her house before I could marry him. My wild fancy was attracted by the idea of strange adventure, and I consented. I went on board, and a person wearing the robes of a priest performed the ceremony. We sailed the same hour. We landed at Matagorda Bay, and came across to this place accompanied by seven of his friends, or, rather, tools. We lived under this tree while they built the rancho, and then they returned.

“The Indians promptly recognized him, and he soon acquired an extraordinary ascendancy over them, and was elected war chief by the Cayguas. I discovered by accident among his papers a letter of his to the dissolute friend who officiated as mock priest in the ceremony on board his vessel. Oh, the terrible and death-like revulsion that followed upon this discovery!

“I should have slain him at once; but who can tell all the mysteries of woman’s love—all its long-suffering and patient endurance!

“I became reckless and desperate, and, for the purpose of diverting myself from morbid broodings, threw myself into all the action of Albert’s life. I never told him of the deadly wrong I had discovered he had done me, but determined that my revenge should be that of a proud woman. I was already a perfect horse-woman, and very promptly acquired a knowledge of the use of arms. As I have told you, I rapidly surpassed him in reckless daring. I saved his life in one of our most desperate combats with the Indians, and from that time commanded his mean, tyrannical na-

ture by my eye. Before I made the dreadful discovery of the letter, I had suspected his unfaithfulness, but was too honorable to watch him.

“After this I had no scruples, and soon ascertained that he had from the earliest period of our arrival here drawn around him a regular harem of Indian girls. This was the infernal consummation of injury. There was nothing more left for me to suffer, and now my proud consolation was, that out of the maddening agony I rose strong enough to overbear his base, ferocious nature, and held his fiercest moods in acknowledged subjection to my will.

“You know all the rest, except that I had not yet made the full discovery of all his brutal disloyalty with regard to the Indian women until the time of my return from captivity with you. I then found that he had several of them about the rancho, and I think you must have caught glimpses of them at our dinner under this tree.

“Now my story is finished, and you both know all that I can tell!”

It is unnecessary for me to dwell upon all that followed. Landeville was satisfied, and I was happy as the realization of an ideal could make me, for the integrity of which the passionate lover had struggled through many glooms, led solely by the illumination of Faith within himself.

We got back, accompanied by my faithful Camanches, to the Trinity settlement. We encountered many adventures on the way, but they were very like many that we have described on our way out, and we shall not attempt to tell of them again.

Old Hicks was the presiding and guiding spirit of all our progress back, as he had been of that out; and we enjoyed the delicious pleasure of seeing the weary old veteran fold in his embraces once more the ruddy and sparkling beauty of Molly “wi’ the lint white locks,” and little Johnny, who, in spite of his dreadful wound, was now a hale, nutty-brown, vigorous boy.

We dismissed our Indians at Independence, Missouri, and rewarded their faithfulness with what they conceived to be magnificent presents.

They returned fully satisfied, and, no doubt, at this day constitute a portion of the legendary sentinels who guard the Gold Mountain. Ours is only one among many of the futile attempts to reach this extraordinary mine. Our race will have to conquer, and even exterminate the whole Camanche confederacy, before we can ever reach or possess it. Before and since the time of this narrative, party after party has been cut, to pieces, in the effort to reach it, by the jealous guardians who watch all its approaches.

Several years have passed since the adventures we have given above occurred. I am now a resident of New Orleans ; Emilie L'Entville is my wife ; and, besides two bold, willful, and unmanageable boys of our own, we have little Molly and John in our household. The old man Hicks peacefully laid down and died about six months after our return, and we sent for the children. The large and valuable property, in the endeavor to recover which the mother of Emilie lost her life, is now ours, and constitutes, with its enhanced value, a handsome fortune for us. "Uncle Jacques," as the young ones call him, is connected with the American Fur Company, and yet manages once in a year or two to come back to us, loaded with the rarest trophies of savage-land. He is necessarily a great favorite with the little ones.

THE END.

Harper's New Catalogue.

A NEW DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE OF HARPER & BROTHERS' PUBLICATIONS is now ready for distribution, and may be obtained gratuitously on application to the Publishers personally, or by letter, post-paid.

The attention of gentlemen, in town or country, designing to form Libraries or enrich their literary collections, is respectfully invited to this Catalogue, which will be found to comprise a large proportion of the standard and most esteemed works in English Literature—COMPREHENDING ABOUT TWO THOUSAND VOLUMES—which are offered in most instances at less than one half the cost of similar productions in England.

To Librarians and others connected with Colleges, Schools, etc., who may not have access to a reliable guide in forming the true estimate of literary productions, it is believed the present Catalogue will prove especially valuable as a manual of reference.

To prevent disappointment, it is suggested that, whenever books can not be obtained through any bookseller or local agent, applications with remittance should be addressed direct to the Publishers, which will be promptly attended to.

82 Cliff Street, New York, Nov., 1847.

443844①

PS	Webber, C. W.
3157	Old Hicks the
W635	guide...
O43	1848
1848	
SCNHRB	

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION LIBRARIES

3 9088 00452 8089